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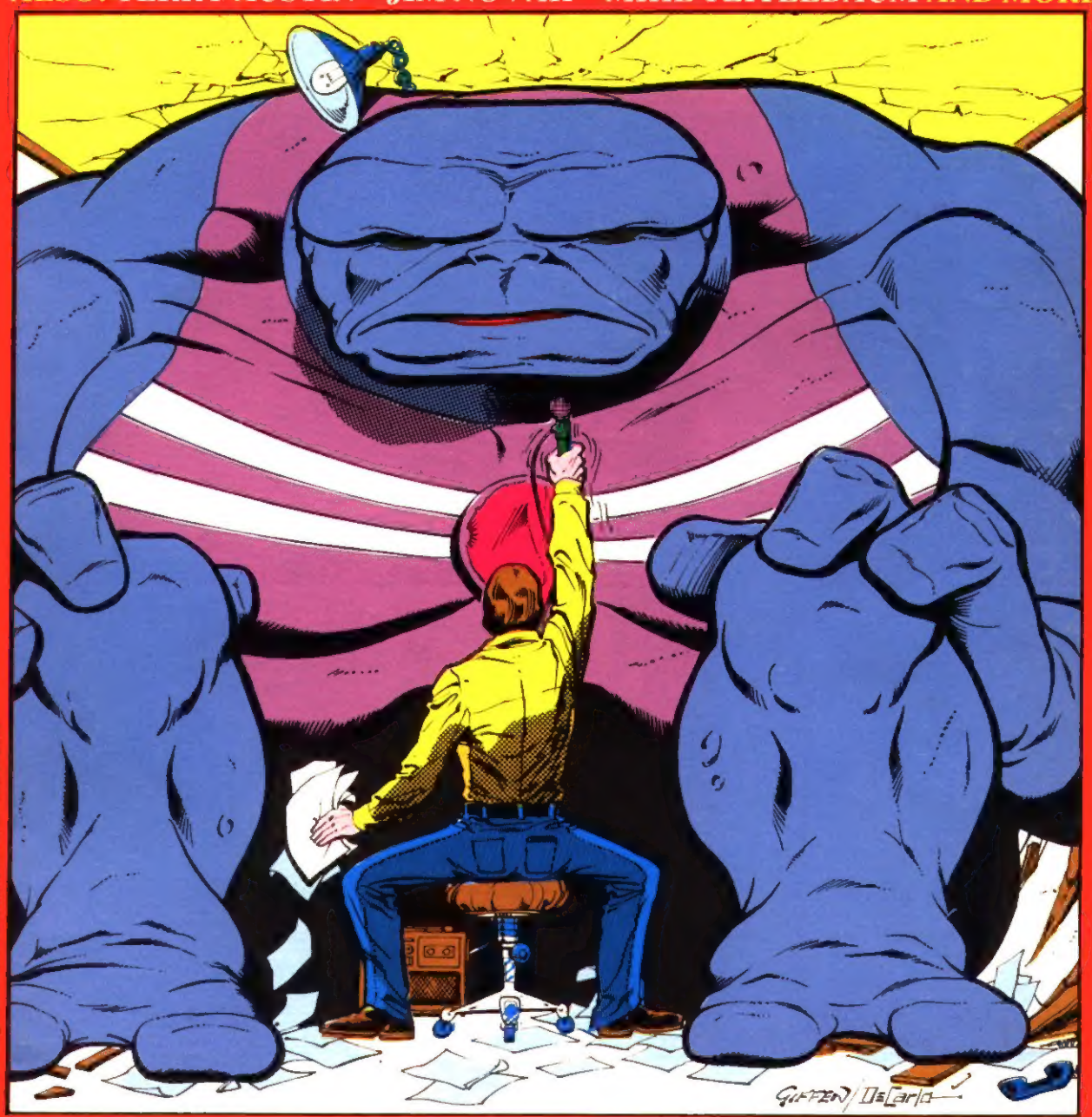

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sepa.

thanks for the gracious gift, guys!

UP FRONT

(In conversation with artist/writer Ed Hannigan at The Orchid bar on 26th & Lexington Avenue. . .)

ED HANNIGAN: *Why interviews?*

DAK: The act of writing, to me, is work. You sit alone in front of the typewriter and figure out what you want to say. It becomes this laborious thought process. On the other hand, when you're speaking, you can often explain to somebody perfectly what you have in mind, what you intend to do and how. Once you tape it, then you can re-arrange it and edit it and you have it, without having to go through the laborious process.

ED: *I would think that becoming at ease with the tape recorder would be difficult. If I know I'm being recorded I have a tendency to freeze up.*

DAK: It doesn't bother me much any more, I've done so many interviews.

ED: *Yeah, but you're asking the questions. It's harder for the person giving the answers.*

DAK: Right. The best thing is just to treat it as a normal conversation.

ED: *Many times I would have been glad to know someone had taped a creative conversation.*

DAK: You have me wishing now that I had taped all of the conversations concerning the magazine. It would take a great deal of editing, but in keeping with the idea of all interviews, even the editorial could use taped excerpts to let readers listen in on the conception of the first issue. . .

(In later conversation with editor/writer Roger Slifer at K.C. Place on Ninth Avenue in Hell's Kitchen. . .)

I used to edit FOOM, Marvel's very own fan magazine, and liked doing it a lot. Ever since, publishing a periodical

about comics has been in the back of my mind, so I met **Jim Salicrup** for lunch one day and said: this is my idea for a magazine. It'll have this, it'll have that, and it'll have interviews.

And so I rattled all this stuff off and Jim said, "Well, it sounds good, but skip the other stuff—why not go *all* interview."

I was taken aback. All interview?! Gasp! But then I thought, yeah, why not? Everybody gets plenty of outside opinion from the other comics fanzines, so why clone them? Why not just stick with the interviews, the behind-the-scenes, in-depth inside viewpoints? The more I thought about it, the more I liked the idea.

With most articles, once you read a paragraph or two, you can pretty well pick up on the bias of the writer. And I resent that—articles attempting to masquerade as objective pieces of work.

Interviews are more honest. As far as bias goes, you don't have to be on your guard — it's right out there, in an interview. You don't have to read between the lines. And people are very interested in that, in what others have to say. They want to know — forget what critics and reviewers think — they want to know what the person who actually does something has to say about what he's doing.

That night, I just couldn't get to sleep. My mind kept working on the magazine. One idea after another. If you say let's fill a magazine with interviews — that's a lot of space. What do you do, just chuck interviews into it? That doesn't really compute.

Suddenly, the structure seemed obvious: why not do a take-off on comic-book credits? Feature interviews with writers, pencilers, inkers, letterers, colorists, editors. And I thought, gee, there's an outline for INTERVIEW. But why not include production people as well as publishers — and, for that matter, why not distributor, why not dealer, why not fan in the street? Take it the whole way.

The more I thought about how many people are involved with comics on every level, and how many things are unknown about the field and really would be interesting to people if they ever got the chance to hear — the faster my mind worked.

So I jumped out of bed and made frantic notes, filling up zillions of little note cards with tiny, crabbed handwriting, and the magazine's just taken off since then.

There are something like 18 regular and semi-regular departments, which is a little much, but hopefully if the magazine does well I can expand the amount of pages. Any of these departments — other than the essential ones, the skeleton structure that's based on the comic credits — can be here if we have good material, but needn't if we don't, which gives the magazine flexibility and a wide range.

To help differentiate departments, the shorter feature columns toward the front and back will be brief interviews from which the questions have been stricken, so in effect it's as if the featured person is just rapping with the reader — like this oral editorial.

For the main interviews, we'll have people in comics whom everyone is interested in — such as **Steve Gerber** and **Keith Giffen** — conducted in casual conversational form, with questions, answers, digressions, interruptions and diversions intact. Unlike a carefully-edited formal interview, it'll be exactly as if you were there, listening in, yourself.

The idea is to provide a place where comics fans and professionals can get to know one another as people. That's why we won't only be concentrating on the big guns of comics. We'll also have the kind of stuff you never see — interviews with merchandising, production, business, publishing people, and every other fascinating comics-associated area you can imagine. I think the sheer density of facts and material will prove absorbing. There'll be such an incredible amount of input — the kind that you just never ever get anywhere else about comics.

Some of the other fanzines do a very good critical job, particularly THE COMICS JOURNAL, but in this case people will speak for themselves. Nobody is going to put words in anybody's mouth. If somebody has something to say, he'll say it. That's interesting, and that's something you really don't get enough of.

FOOM was sort of a combination of what this magazine will be and what AMAZING HEROES has come to be. Since AMAZING HEROES is concentrating on the characters, we'll spotlight the creative folks.

It makes perfect use of all the things I have at hand. I mean, I'm in comics, I know almost everyone active in the field, I deal with them every day, and I love talking to people — so, y'know, putting together this magazine sort of combines all that in one fun package. To me, it's ideal, because I know that even as a fan, I would have loved it.

And, y'know, I've been longing to do something like this for years. It's just taken me an incredibly long time to stumble on a simple idea: why not let people speak for themselves?

INTERVIEW is the voice of comics.

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ROGER SLIFER & KEITH GIFFEN

On a sultry summer afternoon I met Roger and Keith for lunch at the Burger & Brew, on the ground floor of the Warner Communications building near Rockefeller Plaza. Over chiliburgers, the writer/artist team on THE OMEGA MEN—DC's forthcoming special-format, direct-sales-only title—discussed the genesis, development, and future of the bold new science fiction series. . .

DAK: *How did you guys get on OMEGA MEN?*

ROGER SLIFER: The first time I saw the characters was when **Marv Wolfman** was getting ready to introduce them in the GREEN LANTERN series. I had been on staff at DC for a short time, and I was in the office when I saw the sketches. Marv was very excited about them. I thought he had some fairly interesting characters. Some I liked more than others, but they had potential. Marv sort of established the parameters of their personalities.

KEITH GIFFEN: My first real glimpse of the characters was in GREEN LANTERN. I played around with redesigning Broot and Tigorr and coming up with a new Omega, a person who would be coming in eventually.

DAK: *You're notorious for changing costumes or redesigning them.*

KEITH: Now my kick is Kalista. I think it's important that an artist feel comfortable—if I have to draw an issue of SUPERMAN where Luthor shows up in that horrible purple-and-green thing he wears, I just have to draw him for one or two issues, so I don't have to worry about it. I have to draw these people issue after issue after issue, so I have to feel comfortable. Otherwise, I can't take it seriously and the series starts becoming bits and slapstick.

DAK: *It occurs to me now that we three were actually a team on THE DEFENDERS for a brief period, when Roger and I*

GIFFEN: "Take DAREDEVIL — it's like a ballet, it's beautiful violence. Not in OMEGA MEN."

were co-scripting it and you were drawing it. Anyway, I remember when The Zodiac came back you did new costumes for all of them. . .

KEITH: I couldn't draw the old costumes. I just couldn't and I was going crazy when Valkyrie was wearing that big metal brassiere. You have to compromise, too. I wanted to kill Kalista.

ROGER: I said "no."

DAK: *So you'll cripple her for life. (Laughter.)*

KEITH: I told **Paul Levitz** I wanted to kill Karate Kid and he told me to calm down. We're trying to play the OMEGA MEN very realistic. Without the Code in terms of art, I can portray battle scenes which aren't ballets—the whole romance that people seem to have with violence. The little kids running around banging someone on the head with a hammer until a bump comes up, like a Bugs Bunny cartoon. Take DAREDEVIL—it's like a ballet, it's beautiful violence. Not in OMEGA MEN. It's shown as clumsy struggling, people get cut and bleed and it's not pretty.

ROGER: I think it's important we portray a realistic view of violence. I feel philosophically that if you're going to portray violence you should do it with a purpose.

KEITH: It should be distasteful. I don't want people coming away from a fight scene in OMEGA MEN saying, "What a great fight scene." I want them to feel a little bit uneasy. Something happened that wasn't very nice.

DAK: *How far ahead are you in the plans?*

KEITH: Don't ask.

ROGER: Not very far.

KEITH: We finished the first issue. We have characters lined up.

ROGER: And we have the general direction for the first year, but issue-to-issue we're still coming up with a lot as we go along.

KEITH: Roger has outlines as to where he wants to go, but there's room for me to jump in there at any time.

ROGER: Already, I'm thinking of making a major change in issue #3, so it's not like anything is etched in stone.

KEITH: Remember how we used to work on THE DEFENDERS?

DAK: *Yeah.*

KEITH: We'd get down and talk out the ideas. You'd hand in a skeletal plot, or maybe get away with not handing a plot in at all. With THE LEGION, we sit down and throw ideas back and forth, Paul types up a really skeletal plot and I go in and put in some slapstick pieces.

DAK: *I've always enjoyed working that way much more, because as you go along, things occur to you while you're working. I think you get a better book that way.*

KEITH: I know, I've done a couple of covers for **Len Wein** and I have all the respect in the world for him, but I don't think I could work on a series with him. He's got a set idea as to how comic books should be done, a very solid, personal vision. So have I, and sometimes we don't mesh that well. If Paul came in and said, "This is the way THE LEGION should be—" or if Roger said, "This is the way THE OMEGA MEN should be—" I'd have a much harder time working with them.

PRIMUS...

ROGER: I enjoy working on a new book for much the same reasons. First of all, you're not going to have an editor with a preconceived notion of what the characters should be. And second of all, since you're creating them, you're going to do the types of characters you're interested in doing, and not be locked into something that's been going on for twenty years.

DAK: *How do you two like being in on launching a more-or-less new series? I know the Omega Men have made appearances here and there—*

WAITER: Two chiliburgers. Would you like any pickles, relish?

DAK: *I don't think so.*

KEITH: The OMEGA MEN have been guest stars, that's all. There's never been any development of the characters. We got them basically untouched. Even if you're working on a book that's been established, you can still change characters. You can't change basic personalities, but you can maneuver them around.

ROGER: You can, but you have to be working with people who are willing to go along with it. Working with Len, I understand why you would feel constrained. My BATMAN story that Paul bought and Dick ended up using when he took over editing the book, I don't think Len would have bought because I don't think he would have had Batman drag a man back into a burning building.

KEITH: I think the cover killed it.

ROGER: Yeah, the cover was terrible.

DAK: *Keith, what are you doing besides OMEGA MEN?*

KEITH: DC PRESENTS just came out with the DOOM PATROL. **Julie Schwartz** helped me plot next April's issue of DC PRESENTS which is Superman and the legion of substitute heroes. We're doing it along the line of an old Warner Brothers ROADRUNNER cartoon. The villain, the Ambush Bug, who also appears in the DOOM PATROL, is a Bugs Bunny type. He's got the ability to fall off a building and come out unscathed. Same dialogue, same patter. When I was just doing THE LEGION, I was bitching around the office that I needed a change of pace. I was doing issues of THE LEGION—straight sci-fi—back to back to back. THE LEGION is a science fiction series with about thirty different super-powered beings, so they gave me OMEGA MEN as a change of pace—which is a science fiction series with a hundred super-powered beings!

GIFFEN: "I don't think I was good

DAK: *So are you going to stick with both series?*

KEITH: I'm satisfied. I'm not going to leave THE LEGION and I don't want to leave OMEGA MEN. I like science fiction books, I guess. With all the bitching I do about the two books being so similar, I like them. It beats the hell out of the standard New York City book where everyone swings.

DAK: *Have you been giving a lot of interviews lately?*

KEITH: I did a long one for THE LEGION OUTPOST, a fanzine, and a short one for AMAZING HEROES. That's about it for the mainstream fanzines. There's only so much I can say about myself without getting redundant. I bore easy.

DAK: *Did you talk at all about your background, where you came from, your training? I know you've been reticent about such things.*

KEITH: There's not much to tell. After high school I went directly to work. I spent a miserable year at the School For Visual Arts where I took courses like Environmental Training. It was an hour of bouncing a ball and seeing what thoughts come into your head. One time the guy blindfolds us and locks us out of the classroom and says that whoever stops moving first fails. We had kids wandering on the street, blindfolded. I figured that wasn't right.

DAK: *A peculiar way to teach people to draw.*

KEITH: I had a painting instructor who said, just show up twice this year and you'll pass. So I bombed out of that and went to work at Hoffman-La Roche.

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TIGORR...

DAK: *That's interesting. They're the big pharmaceutical manufacturer.*

KEITH: I also took library books out and drew. I had a week's vacation and said to myself—I'm not going back, I'm going to break into comics now.

So, like an idiot, I decided I'd call everyone first. And if you call, they're never hiring. Atlas/Seaboard was in business at this point and I listed the companies from the best to the worst. I figured I'd start in the middle, so I called up Atlas. The woman who answered was really nice and told me, "Come on over, we'll look at your work." Very positive. "But," she said "we're going out of business next week." (Laughter)

I was going to try Charlton next, but I thought if I try them, I'll never know if I could have made it into Marvel or DC. So I called Marvel and got the receptionist. I asked if it was okay to drop off some work for consideration. She said to stop by, leave it and pick it up the next day. Real positive attitude.

So I dropped it off. She takes the envelope, puts it inside the desk drawer, closes it and says, "Come back tomorrow." I figured it'd never get out of the drawer. So, the next day, I called first to find out if it had been inside the Bullpen. She said that Johnny was looking at it, and told me to pick it up the following day. A very negative, down attitude.

When I walked in and reminded her who I was, she said they had been going crazy trying to get hold of me. I hadn't put my name, address, phone number, anything— I just handed in the work. It turned out **Ed Hannigan** was giving up "The Sword and the Star," and they needed somebody. **Bill Mantlo**, the writer, saw and liked my stuff.

Bill was the one who really sold me for that job. He was in there pushing for it. All I know is somebody named Johnny looked at my portfolio—**John Romita** or **John Verpoorten**—I don't know who. But, whoever it was, **Bill Mantlo** talked to him and said to give me a shot. They cancelled the book out from under me. I was half way through the story and Bill calls me and says, "Bad news. They cancelled the book." Christ. It was downhill from there with Marvel.

DAK: *How long were you around? You had a hiatus there for a while I even put a letter in THE COMICS READER trying to find you.*

KEITH: I got in about very early '76 and was around for a couple of years. I don't remember exactly how long. I bounced

NIMBUS...

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back then. I wouldn't have hired me."

back and forth from Marvel to DC. I didn't know what the hell I was doing. The last couple of issues of THE DEFENDERS we worked on, I knew then I was going to get out. I went back to DC and marked time for a while. Then I left and went to South Jersey and divorced myself from comics. I did not read a comic or look at anything having to do with them. I took a couple of life drawing classes at County Community College and just drew until I figured I had washed all of the **Kirby** swipes and trying to be like whoever is hot in the business out of my system. I came back up and tried to get a job at Warren. The first thing they told me was my stuff was good, but I'd have to draw in the Warren style and I was right back at square one— here we go again!

DAK: *Yeah, because they had told you to draw in the Kirby style at Marvel.*

KEITH: I was told to draw like **Kirby**, and then when I did, everyone told me he was passe'. I asked them how they wanted me to draw, and they said, like **Keith Giffen**. And Keith had been told to draw like **Kirby** for so long—that was the way I studied drawing. It was kind of dumb, because all the criticism I was getting from people like **John Romita**, I should have just gotten on the phone and called Jack and said, "Here's what they think of your work." I wasn't getting anything out of it.

DAK: *There were incredible rumors when you were gone that you were taking drugs or doing time in prison. . .*

KEITH: I was down at the Jersey shore. I sold vacuum cleaners door-to-door. I made more money there than I ever made at Marvel. Then I came back here and was a collector. I had a lot of bad blood with a lot of people in the industry, and one of those people was **Joe Orlando**. So, I was going to the PATH station and I thought I should call Joe and give him the satisfaction of hanging up on me. He was nice and asked me to come up and show him my stuff. I expected, "YOU!" and a hang up. So I went up there and walked out with some ghost stories to do. **Mike Barr** like my stuff and that led to DR. FATE, which led to THE LEGION. It snowballed from there. I learned how to make deadlines.

DAK: *That's a good thing to know in comics.*

KEITH: I learned how to draw, too.

DAK: *Even better.*

KEITH: I don't think I was good back then. I wouldn't have hired me.

DAK: *How did THE OMEGA MEN get their own series?*

ROGER: The Omega Men guest-starred in some more issues of GREEN LANTERN, TEEN TITANS and ACTION, and at some point Mary decided to definitely go ahead with a regular series. The sales on GREEN LANTERN had gone up some when the Omega Men appeared in issues, which indicated a

Rough preliminary sketch by Keith Giffen for an OMEGA MEN promotional piece, considerably different from the final published version.

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SLIFER: "I don't believe in groups."

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Silhouettes and shadows on Changralyn, from THE OMEGA MEN #1.

reader audience. Marv was realistic enough to know that his writing schedule wouldn't permit him to take on another book like THE OMEGA MEN. He knew I liked the characters and offered it to me. I was doing other things at the time, but I was interested, so we went back and forth. I had to make up my mind if I wanted to write them or not. I hadn't done a lot of scripting in recent years, because there weren't a lot of editors I felt comfortable working with. Since Marv was planning to edit the series himself, I was interested, since we work so well together.

DAK: *For Johnny-come-lately readers, most of your writing had been for Marvel...*

ROGER: At the time I was on staff and scripting for Marvel, I didn't have a lot of spare time either, so I didn't do a lot of writing.

DAK: *Aren't you famous for writing one issue of each of the top books?*

ROGER: Somehow, I wound up writing the FANTASTIC FOUR for one issue, an issue of BATMAN I was very happy with, IRON MAN, POWER MAN... there's a SPIDER-MAN in the files somewhere...

DAK: *Don't forget THE AVENGERS.*

ROGER: The AVENGERS ANNUAL that I did with **George Perez**. I was very happy with. I was much happer with it before it was edited. I felt that the editing took most of the life out of it. I think that editing job really put me off writing.

DAK: *So in recent times you've been at DC on staff— but not writing.*

ROGER: Right. Aside from the BATMAN story, of course— which was an idea I proposed to Paul while I was staying with him for a month or so. I had spoken to him about doing BATMAN stories before, but there were other writers in the DC hierarchy who had dibs on it. He had resisted my attempts in the past to write BATMAN. I had just gotten an idea from watching "The Scarecrow of Romney Marsh" on TV when I proposed the plot idea to him, and there was no hesitation on his part. He said if I got it done in time, he would try to put it in DETECTIVE #500, because it was a story he thought would fit thematically. Unfortunately, the closing date was about five days later.

DAK: *You wrote part of the BATMAN script in Indiana?*

ROGER: Yeah, and parts in Georgia.

DAK: *I remember...when you were staying at my place.*

ROGER: That's a time when I was on the road quite a bit, roaming around.

KALISTA...

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Since I missed the DETECTIVE #500 deadline, I had plenty of time, so I worked on it until I was really happy with the script. I turned it in twice the length that Paul actually wanted it, but I couldn't help myself.

WAITER: Anything else?

KEITH: Martini.

ROGER: More hot water.

Paul thought it would make a good twelve-page story and what I had in mind probably couldn't be done in that space. By the time he sent it back to me, I was in California, and he asked me to trim it by five pages. I wracked my brains and cut it and that's the version he ended up buying. By the time it was in the final version, **Dick Giordano** had become editor of the BATMAN books, so the script became his prerogative. But he liked it with some minor changes. Every editor sees things a bit differently.

DAK: *That's all the writing you've done for DC?*

ROGER: Even that I started before I went on staff there. I always believed you should be able to make a living working solely freelancing or solely on staff.

Up until THE OMEGA MEN, I had been able to adhere to that philosophy. But I decided I wanted furniture in my apartment.

With THE OMEGA MEN, too many factors converged for me to ignore them. It was the opportunity for me to work with Marv, who I felt very comfortable with; it was the opportunity to work on a book with a better quality and format, and one that was not under approval of the Comics Code *per se*, so I could show a corrupt political figure without wondering if the code people would be upset. It was more freedom than the regular color comics could offer. The royalty program had come in by then, too, and that made it more economical to do freelance work. Before, the page rate compensation did not make it worth my while to devote the time necessary for scripting a series. But, with the royalty program, I have enough confidence in myself and certainly in Keith, that I think the book will sell well and reward Keith and I accordingly. On top of that I'm working with one of the best artists in the business.

GIFFEN: "It's a General Motors of groups."

DAK: *Did you work up a plot or presentation?*

ROGER: Even though they liked the characters, before any book is approved at DC, **Dick Giordano** and **Jenette Kahn** look at a presentation. The fact that we had Keith as an artist already lined up for it helped. In the proposal, I laid out a first issue plot plus a scenario for the first two or three issues to give an idea of the direction. Dick liked it. Jenette eventually saw the presentation and approved the book and we went ahead with the first issue.

DAK: *Did you have a complete plot to work from on the first issue?*

KEITH: I was sitting on the plot for about two weeks before the final approval came down.

ROGER: Everyone felt it was going to go through. Before the official approval, we had even decided on a logo for the book.

DAK: *Keith, I noticed you put in a lot of extra art touches, like the armored bracelet on one character's tail.*

ROGER: I noticed that yesterday.

KEITH: That's for me, to keep my interest. Not that I'm bored, but little touches like that keep things consistent. That character is in charge and he has a thing on his tail, so everytime I show a Gordanian Commander, I'll show something on his tail. Eventually it will get, I hope, so that we don't have to say—this is the leader. Like some of the inhabitants on Broot's world have tattoos and some don't.

DAK: *What does that signify?*

KEITH: It's a ritual thing. Once they hit puberty, they're slapped with one.

ROGER: The second issue will probably tell what they represent. Broot's people are steeped in rather bizarre religious traditions and I think the tattoos probably have something to do with that.

DAK: *What other cultural characteristics are you establishing? I've seen the pencilled pages and they look interesting, but since it hasn't been lettered yet, it's hard to figure out exactly what's happening.*

KEITH: Well. . .I was looking for a way of showing the women of Broot's world without falling back on the fact that they are Broots-with-breasts. I made them squatter and less defined. The male of the species wears the brighter plumage. Broot's the bright plumage, and if he's the fancy one on this planet you have to imagine what the women look like. Plain, massive, but with spindly little arms. I went back to the idea that it's a man's world. I'll probably get a lot of static from the feminists. But the women there are simply for physical labor—the way their bodies are structured, they're good for having babies. Other than that, they probably stand around and watch the men go to temple.

ROGER: One of the things we're trying to do is establish that when we have a story take place somewhere on a planet in the Vegan star system, we really define the culture on that planet. When you go somewhere you get the ambiance, so it's not just another bunch of aliens with scales. There is a background and tradition and architecture.

KEITH: Which means a lot of times we're not going to agree with the way a certain planet is governed. I don't agree with a lot of things on *this* planet.

DAK: *Have you worked out other things, like types of weapons and cities?*

KEITH: That's being done as we go along. The only thing I want to do with THE OMEGA MEN is differentiate the science fiction from that in THE LEGION, so there are two different science fiction books. THE LEGION is very clean, idealistic, thirtieth century—we're going to go through hell but come out on top, run all over the universe and have a grand old time. THE OMEGA MEN is going to be more organic. In THE LEGION I work

Keith's pencils for issue #2 — a tragic tale of Broot's former life on Changralyn.

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GIFFEN: "I'd never want to do

up angular cities and vehicles. THE OMEGA MEN I've actually referenced. Everything will have a rounded edge and be smoother and a bit more weather-beaten. There are more heavy shadows.

DAK: *What about the storytelling approach? Are you breaking the art down any differently?*

KEITH: Aside from the characters, you have to make allowances. I'd like to eventually cut loose and go crazy, but I'm not familiar enough with the characters yet. It's hard to do a team book. You can do fancy breakdowns with DR. FATE, DR. STRANGE or even SUPERMAN. It's only one character fighting another character. When you have to keep track of a whole group, it's best to stick with a standard comic-book format and let the story carry the book.

ROGER: There are a lot of things he does unconsciously to set up the story—the panels are diversified in terms of layouts

KEITH: On DR. FATE I would do circular panels, I would not draw panel lines, I'd do an entire page without panel lines, I'd twist and turn the panels. THE OMEGA MEN is a more graphic approach than an impressionistic approach. That's a horrible way to put it.

DAK: *Who's the core of the group?*

ROGER: I don't believe in groups *per se;* I don't think they accomplish anything, so this is more of a society. There are 100 people in it, after all. As it develops, you're going to see a lot more interaction—different groups forming new alliances. There's a lot of discussion about the objectives—

KEITH: It's like a General Motors of comic-book groups, calling a meeting of the board. That's in the first issue, as a matter of fact. The board meets and they go to the stockholders.

ROGER: I never really thought of it that way before.

DAK: *You must have a core of characters.*

ROGER: There are a group of characters already established by Marv who have prominent roles in the first few issues: Primus, Nimbus, Tigorr, Harpis, Broot, Kalista, and Demonia, but they are not necessarily going to remain the most-focused-on members of the group. One of my objectives is to bring back change in comics. The idea that you don't know what's going to happen from month to month, that you can't predict who's going to remain a member of the group. They're fighting a battle, so there will be casualties.

KEITH: This is one of the few books where you could kill off major characters and not alienate a lot of your readership. If Primus dies, I think there are enough people around him of interest that you wouldn't have a big block of readers dropping out. I think people are going to read the OMEGA MEN not for one specific man. Even if there is a favorite, I don't think that if he didn't appear for a certain run of issues that it would destroy the storyline.

DAK: *Sort of like a large novel.*

ROGER: Much more novel-like. I know there are a lot of writers in comics who work very well going from issue to issue and just having a general idea where they're going, but I'm glad I sat down and plotted out a general framework. I plotted with **Steve Gerber** when he was at Marvel, and he would always set up tremendous cliff-hangers and whenever I asked how he was going to get the characters out, he would say he didn't know yet. He would be able to come up with spontaneous things that worked. Keith and I are trying to keep it spontaneous enough to maintain interest without floundering about when it comes to resolving a major development.

DAK: *This isn't a close-ended or maxi-series?*

ROGER: It'll be going on, hopefully, forever.

KEITH: It's the first direct sales title

A rare chance to see both unpublished finished pencils by Keith Giffen — as well as earlier, prototype costume designs for THE OMEGA MEN.

SPIDER-MAN, that's a bullshit book."

© 1982 DC Comics, Inc.

Compare these preliminary costume designs with the final versions printed elsewhere in this feature interview to see exactly how they differ.

from DC that's *not* a mini- or maxi-series.

DAK: *It's going to be on excellent paper stock, too?*

KEITH: Yeath. Air-brushed cover, the whole bit.

ROGER: We're going to be cramming in a lot of different printing techniques. The book will also be much more exciting just from the technical standpoint.

DAK: *I don't know how to put this, but you used to do some pretty strange things back in the days of THE DEFENDERS, Keith. You'd do a scene change, and on the first panel you'd put an important thing in the upper left hand corner where I would want to put a caption that said, "This is a scene change." I used to have to do handstands to convey that the scene had changed. . .*

KEITH: I've been paying more attention to the writer's side, although I did things like that to Roger and I did it in the latest LEGION — like, let me see them place his word balloons on *this* page. **Marty Pasko** used to tell me he loved writing DR. FATE, but he didn't know where to place the damn balloons.

DAK: *On THE DEFENDERS #50, where we had the big knock-down, drag-out fight with all those characters— there was no place to put a good-sized balloon. So I had to write little short things and tuck 'em under their arms. It was a whole different way of writing.*

KEITH: In the middle of a big fight, you don't have that much time to launch into a large speech. As a reader, you didn't notice it in Stan's old stuff, but Captain America would be beating the hell out of the Red Skull and he would be carrying on this incredible philosophical argument. *You* get into a fight and see how philosophical you get! Once you've got the enemy down and kicked his head a couple of times, then start talking to him, but first make sure someone is defeated.

ROGER: It's always a challenge to get the pictures and the writing to work in tandem.

DAK: *You guys are working Marvel style?*

ROGER: Yeah. Actually, someone pointed out that "Marvel-style" was in use long before **Stan Lee** made it famous.

DAK: *But Keith's working from your plot and you're putting dialogue on the art.*

ROGER: Yes. On the first issue, between the first and last pages there's definitely been a progression for us both. We're on the phone two or three times a week. If Keith's working on a section and wants to do something differently, we'll work out whatever the problem is. We're both flexible and we want the best series possible.

DAK: *You seem to have pepped up now that you're involved in the project.*

ROGER: I'm having a lot of fun with it. I got off the phone with Keith the other day and realized I was really excited. It's been a long time since I've felt like that.

KEITH: Rog, is this your first regular series?

ROGER: I was technically the "regular" writer on THE DEFENDERS when I first came on that series.

DAK: *It was his assignment, not mine.*

ROGER: I was suposed to be the steady writer. I got Dave to work on it with me because we had worked together before and got along well. I couldn't stay on because of time—

DAK: *He was on Marvel's editorial staff back then.*

ROGER: Yeah, and I was having a hard time keeping up with both staff and freelance. I was also the regular writer on the TWO-IN-ONE book for about three or four issues. Once again, Dave came in and took over scripting for me.

KEITH: Does that mean I can look forward to working with Dave on the OMEGA MEN soon?

SLIFER: "They're fighting a

ROGER: No.
DAK: *Aw, heck.*
ROGER: On TWO-IN-ONE, I found I had a rough time every month coming up with a storyline that would use other characters and still respect what another writer was doing on the regular series. I always thought I should check with the writer and try to be compatible with him. If you spend all your time on the phone trying to coordinate what other writers are doing with what you're doing, it's very hard.
KEITH: One of the things about THE OMEGA MEN is that no one else is using them. I like the book. It's not tied in with licensing. I would never want to work on a character that's licensed up the kiester, like SUPERMAN, BATMAN, the books that are locked into certain styles and formats. The hero can't do this or that. I'd never want to do SPIDER-MAN, that's a bullshit book. Not that the book is bullshit, it's the amount of it you have to put up with to get the book out.
ROGER: THE OMEGA MEN is really the first series I've worked on that I'm personally committed to staying on for a long time. I'm very interested in developing new characters for the group and in doing allegorical-type stories. I've been away from writing for a long time and have been building up storylines and themes I'm interested in examining. For the first time, I feel that all the elements have come together, and Marv being the editor is another big part of that.
KEITH: We're not getting any hassles. I can live with that. Marv's the best kind of editor, too. He says do it and show it to him after we're done. He doesn't want to sit there and dictate to us. He wants us to make his job simple by turning out the best possible book.
ROGER: He's a guiding-hand. If Keith and I are too close to see a flaw, he'll step in, but in the main he just observes and lets us write and draw the book unhampered.
DAK: *A lot of editors have a style of their own in which they would write or draw a story, and they can't divorce themselves from that when they look at your work. If your work isn't done the*

WHO IS THE WOMAN IN BLACK...?

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THE FUTURE OF THE OMEGA MEN

Slifer says. . .

The major part of the OMEGA MEN #2 storyline has to do with Broot's origin! How Broot came to be the way he is, which is a bit more of a bizarre tale than you might think. It'd be very surprising if Broot didn't turn out to be the philosopher of the series. Just because a woman is blonde doesn't mean she's dumb; the same thing with Broot—just because he's big doesn't mean he can't have a complex personality.

The first two issues came to me pretty much whole, in terms of the storyline. I wanted to get into Broot's character and background. People hadn't been given enough background on the Omega Men, so I felt we should immediately flesh out the characters in the group. In the future, we'll concentrate on the others, as the storyline moves along. Things are being revealed slowly about all the characters.

Assuming it shapes up the way we've been talking about, issue #3 primarily concentrates on Kalista—but there are still a lot of sub-plots and things running through it with the other characters. At least as it's planned now, Kalista is the major focus of #3, though I don't mean the issue will be her origin story in the way that #2 is Broot's. It stars her and reveals a lot about her past and how she's drawn into conflict with The Citadel.

For the future of the Omega Men, we're still developing The Citadel War, and introducing some new villains, while exploring the personalities of the major group members. Keith and I have laid out a lot of the different worlds that we want to do. In fact, we sat down one day and designed the whole Vegan Star System! We still have some gaps to fill in, a few planets to fill in, but most of them are roughed out in a broad way, and we know pretty much which planets the main characters have come from. . .where their planets are and how it all works.

In the first issue, we more or less introduced the characters and set up the main conflict of the series. As we go on, the focus will shift. The thing we're really trying to do is deal with a society and show how it works. So not only are you seeing the conflicts with The Citadel villains and the other things, but you're also seeing a lot of internal conflicts between the Omega Men, because when you have a group of one hundred characters it's not like the TEEN TITANS where six members get together and reach a decision. When you've got a hundred people together, there are a lot of different desires, a lot of different motivating forces, and it's a real struggle to hold them all together. There are a lot of different feelings about what their objectives should be. It's human nature. Alien nature, too.

I like different Omega Men for different

battle, so there will be casualties."

way they would do it, then they want to tamper with it. It's unfortunate, and so I know that it takes a lot of discipline to be able to do that kind of hands-off editing.

KEITH: We also have **Mike De Carlo**, who is very dedicated, so I feel confident knowing that what I put down on the paper is going to show up in print. I'm not going to get someone who has a lazy day and looks at machinery and turns it into a shadow. Mike cares about the book, and that makes it a heck of a lot easier for me. The man is also a finishing inker, so if it ever gets too tight for me, I know that for an issue I can do breakdowns, and the book will maintain a certain look.

DAK: *How did Mike come to be involved with the project?*

ROGER: I had seen his work quite some time ago in the office, and remembered particularly a FLASH cover he worked on that impressed me with his inking style. Previously, he worked with **Dick Giordano**, and he has a style similar to early **Terry Austin**. I thought it would be compatible with Keith's style.

KEITH: I was wavering about doing the book for a while. Then they mentioned that they got **Mike DeCarlo** for the OMEGA MEN, and that day I walked into Roger's office and said that I wanted to do it. I fell in love with Mike's stuff on GREEN LANTERN. Nice, crisp, clean, looks like he knows how to follow a line.

ROGER: I also didn't want the same inker as on THE LEGION because I wanted to keep the two books looking different. I was very much interested in **De Carlo**, so when we did the presentation we also did an art piece, and I was curious to see if Mike would work as well over Keith as I thought he would.

We all had a lunch meeting so that Mike could discuss the art with Keith, to get all the gears meshing before the project got off the ground, so that everyone was looking at it in the same way.

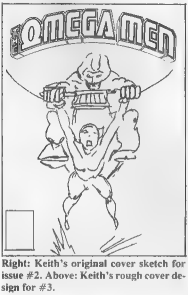
KEITH: It all worked out fine. It's nice to have a team on the book. Everyone cares about the book.

DAK: *Sounds like you're doing it all right.*

ROGER: We're trying.

reasons. I don't necessarily have a favorite. I think it's really too early to define a favorite, because the more you develop a series, the more you discover facets of a character that you didn't see at first. There's a lot of focus on Broot in the first few issues, and I like Broot very much. But as we get into what makes the other Omega Men tick, I know I'll become just as interested in them. My current favorite is whichever one I'm working on at the moment.

Keith and I are kicking around a few ideas about introducing *new* characters. We're developing the ones we have, and when we reach a certain point with them, we'll be bringing in new Omega Men. The woman wearing black will have to remain a mystery for now. Right now, I can't reveal her name or anything about her. Until she appears, and maybe even then, it's a mystery.



Right: Keith's original cover sketch for issue #2. Above: Keith's rough cover design for #3.

1982 DC Comics, Inc.

"There is more creative freedom in comics

STEVE GERBER

I hadn't seen Steve for quite a while. We used to spend time together watching "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman" and talking 'til dawn back in the days when Steve shared the Mad Genius Associates offices with Jim Salicrup and me at 850 Seventh Avenue in New York City. I remember once remarking on his composure while continuing to come and go from his apartment in Hell's Kitchen. That week, a rooftop sniper was regularly shooting at people walking Steve's block. Gerber was shocked, visibly shaken. He'd been so busy that he hadn't even seen the daily headlines on the front page of the city papers. Those were wild and crazy times for Steve, before he moved out west and parted ways with the comics business.

Since then, I'd only seen him briefly, once when he was in the city to meet with network head Fred Silverman for the Ruby-Spears animation studio. Steve showed up in Manhattan again this summer, the weekend of the No-Nukes rally in Central Park, to spend a few days away from the pressures and schedules of the studio. We met over brunch—with Roger Slifer and Karen Berger of DC Comics—at Nanny Rose on the West Side. There was a lot of catching up to do, and his tales of Saturday morning television and California living were totally entrancing. So I called Steve on the Coast and suggested sharing his experiences with Comics Interview. After some careful deliberation, he agreed. . .

DAK: *How does the West Coast agree with you?*

STEVE GERBER: Poorly. I have been a New Yorker since the day I was born in St. Louis. I never fit in in the Midwest, and it's even worse out here. Mellow and laidback is not my style, particularly when it's this facade of mellowness over the unbelievable hostility that people harbor toward one another in L.A.

DAK: *What have you been doing since the intensive FOOM interview we did several years ago? You haven't totally left mainstream comics, because you did the WORLD OF KRYPTON mini-series for DC.*

STEVE: No, THE PHANTOM ZONE.

DAK: *Right. I was thinking of that logo.*

STEVE: It's all the same logo. The Superman Family of Logos.

DAK: *But you more or less disappeared from the scene. You did HOWARD THE DUCK and OMEGA, and you were gone.*

STEVE: Right.

DAK: *So, what have you been up to?*

STEVE: Idid comics for foreign publication for Hanna-Barbera for a year and a half, in 1978 and 1979. That included stuff like JABBERJAW, HONG KONG PHOOEY, SCOOBY-DOO, MAGILLA GORILLA, and various other H-B characters. Most of these stories were published only in France. One MAGILLA and a CAPTAIN CAVEMAN, though, were printed here — by Marvel, as a matter of fact, in their short-lived Hanna-Barbera line. They were written pseudonymously, needless to say.

Then, in mid-1979, I got involved in animation for the first time. I had heard about Ruby-Spears' PLASTIC MAN series from **Mark Evanier**, who was also my editor on the Hanna-Barbera comics. This was a character I had wanted to write for years. I didn't care what the medium was; I was just very interested in writing Plas. Mark had already done a

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Steve Gerber
Occupation: freelance writer
Residence: Burbank, California
Born: St. Louis, Missouri — 20 September 1947
Credits: HOWARD THE DUCK, THE DEFENDERS, PHANTOM ZONE, DESTROYER DUCK, etc.
Training: I left college ten or fifteen hours short of a Masters. One of your generic Master degrees. I had training as a wire gate metal separator in a plant; a department store Santa Claus; a used car salesman; an advertising copywriter; comics, I taught myself, with a little help from Roy Thomas here and there.
Favorite color: Black
Favorite President: James K. Polk
Favorite Comic Book Story: The one in which Superboy discovered Red Kryptonite granules in a can of tomato juice.
Pet Peeve: The truncation of the word "issue" into "ish." The phrase "next ish" in particular has always bothered me. It sounds like it means, "sort of next," the way "bluish" means sort of blue.

now than in television or feature films."

couple of scripts for the show, and I asked him if there were any way he could arrange a meeting for me at Ruby-Spears. It took him almost six months to convince the producer, who is now my employer, that I was a writer worth talking to. At that time, I'd had no experience in the field, and **Joe Ruby** (the "Ruby" half of Ruby-Spears) was meeting with one or more new writers every day. The notion of working with yet another new guy, and a guy with no TV or animation background, was, understandably, not very attractive. Once I got in, though, everything progressed very, very quickly. I did my first PLASTIC MAN script, and immediately they wanted another one from me, and within six more months, I was under exclusive contract to the studio for animation.

DAK: *And that's where you are today.*

STEVE: Yes.

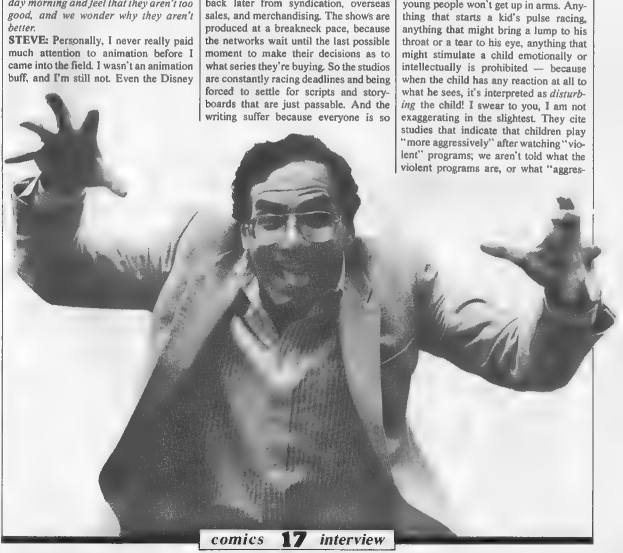
DAK: *Most of us see cartoons on Saturday morning and feel that they aren't too good, and we wonder why they aren't better.*

STEVE: Personally, I never really paid much attention to animation before I came into the field. I wasn't an animation buff, and I'm still not. Even the Disney stuff doesn't hold any particular fascination for me, although I can watch it and appreciate it. The same with some of the Warner Bros. stuff and **Tex Avery**'s work. I find a lot of it very ingenious and very funny, but I'll never be able to tell you who was working at what studio in what year and created what character. And I knew nothing about Saturday morning cartoons *at all* before I started working in the industry. I just wasn't interested. I got involved beacuse of a particular character from *comics* that I wanted to write. It was all sort of a large accident.

Before I go any further, let me say that I am speaking now as an individual, not as a representative of Ruby-Spears.

Anyway, the reasons the animation on Saturday morning shows doesn't look good are exactly the ones you'd expect: money and time. The studios usually do not break even from the sale of a show to a network. The money hopefully comes back later from syndication, overseas sales, and merchandising. The shows are produced at a breakneck pace, because the networks wait until the last possible moment to make their decisions as to what series they're buying. So the studios are constantly racing deadlines and being forced to settle for scripts and storyboards that are just passable. And the writing suffer because everyone is so rushed, because the networks excise anything remotely interesting or funny from the scripts, and because half the so-called writers in the industry are semi-literates.

Everything **Paddy Chayefsky** had to say about television networks was true, by the way. In fact, I don't think he went far enough. The networks are highly departmentalized, and frequently, the departments are actually set up to work at cross-purposes! For example, it's the job of the people in the Programming department to construct a schedule of shows that will get high ratings. It's the job of the people in Broadcast Standards and Practices — the censors — to make sure all of the various pressure groups are not offended by anything that gets on the air. What that usually means is bulldozing the emotional content of every script, so that it's all very flat, very unstimulating, so that Action for Children's Televison and the other groups policing the brains of our young people won't get up in arms. Anything that starts a kid's pulse racing, anything that might bring a lump to his throat or a tear to his eye, anything that might stimulate a child emotionally or intellectually is prohibited — because when the child has any reaction at all to what he sees, it's interpreted as *disturbing* the child! I swear to you, I am not exaggerating in the slightest. They cite studies that indicate that children play "more aggressively" after watching "violent" programs; we aren't told what the violent programs are, or what "aggres-



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"It's all a little strange and perverse."

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I CHANGED THE TITLE — FROM "JAILBIROS OF SPACE" TO "PLANET OF THE FORMER CHILD ABUSE VICTIMS.
HOPE YOU APPROVE.
LISTEN: I DON'T CARE IF YOU'RE DAVID CHOCKMAN, NORMAN LEAR, GRANT TINKER, OR JESUS W. GENIUS -- YOU GOTTA KNOW WHEN TO BACK OFF.
IN TV, YOU SURVIVE BY BEING JUST CHICKENSHIT ENOUGH TO KEEP YOUR SHOW ON THE AIR WITHOUT LOSING YOUR SELF-RESPECT.
NOBODY'LL EVER BE THAT HONEST WITH YOU AGAIN, KIDDO. ME INCLUDED.
© 1981 Steve Gerber & Val Mayerik

From "Role Model" by Steve Gerber and Val Mayerik, published in ECLIPSE #2.

sively" means, or why it's necessarily **bad**, but the conclusion that's drawn is that the children are being "overstimulated" and harmed in some way. The pressure groups and the network censors — most of whom, interestingly, are psychologists — are actively trying to create animated *Valium.* This is their notion of "protecting" the young audience for Saturday morning cartoons.

This whole movement, by the way, began in about 1972. The children who were first "protected" in this manner from violence and emotion are now, say, twelve to twenty years old. The network child psychologists are, I think, directly responsible for giving us the punk-rock generation, with its violence, its ennui, its disdain of emotion, its illiteracy, and its complete absence of faith in the future. I think that's quite an achievement, don't you?

For their part, the Programming departments don't help much, either. Their current tactic for boosting the ratings is to make shows out of "pre-sold" properties. Hence, PAC-MAN, THE DUKES OF HAZZARD, MORK AND MINDY, LAVERNE AND SHIRLEY, THE SMURFS, THE FONZ, GILLIGAN'S PLANET, and God knows what else will comprise most of the Saturday morning schedule this year.

Then, they have these very peculiar ideas about how to *alter* these "pre-sold" items to make them "work" for Saturday morning, since the original idea, which was supposed to hook the kids, obviously isn't enough. Mork and Mindy will be portrayed as *teenagers* in the animated show. The network thinks that every kid in America wants to be a teenager when he or she grows up. I'm only guessing, but there will probably be a *dog* featured prominently in most of these shows — or a *baby*, which, for some reason, the networks think the kids find interesting.

And they insist that every character in every show be what they call "likeable." This is networkese for total absence of character flaws, or even quirks. There must be nothing in a character's personality that the audience might consider peculiar or, to employ the standard catch-all, "negative." The leads in a series must be "fantasy fulfillment" and "role models" for the kids. My guess is that Jimmy Olsen, as he was portrayed by **Jack Larson** on the old SUPERMAN series, would be considered too negative a character for the current Saturday morning philosophy. He whined. He argued with Perry White. He exhibited jealousy, anger, and frustration. Too many negatives. Not a good role model.

DAK: *Aren't there other kinds of restrictions, too — like, you can show guns, but no one can shoot them, that sort of thing?*

STEVE: That varies from network to network. ABC won't allow you to show *any* contemporary weapons. I recently did a story that took place in Berlin, and the censor singlehandedly disarmed the entire East German army to conform to Saturday morning's concept of reality. (The censors, we can infer, for all their concern about children, have no qualms whatsoever about *lying* to them.) On CBS, you can *show* weapons, and they can even go off — if no one is injured, or if they don't go off intentionally. At that network, they're obsessed with *intent* to do harm. A villain can push somebody out of a 93rd-story window on CBS, *if* he knows beforehand that his victim will just fly away unharmed. He can tie somebody to a railroad track if he's absolutely certain a train *isn't* going to come along and pulp the person. As you can gather, it's all a little strange and perverse.

DAK: *It must make it hell to write a script.*

STEVE: It makes it extremely difficult.

DAK: *But you've been surviving.*

STEVE: Yeah.

DAK: *What's it like from the story editor's point of view?*

STEVE: The story editor is a short-order cook. He sits in with the writer and the producer and helps plot the story. Then, he gets the initial draft of the outline or the script. If there's time, he'll read it, make notes, and hand it back to the writer for revisions. If there's not, and there usually isn't, he goes through the script line by line, correcting mechanical problems, clarifying shot descriptions for the storyboard people, making the dialogue consistent with the characters' established speech patterns and personalities, and executing whatever changes are requested by the network and/or the producer.

DAK: *How did the THUNDARR series, which you co-created, come about?*

STEVE: That came out of a lunch meeting I had with **Joe Ruby** in, I think, September of 1979. The earliest ballyhoo was beginning to appear on the CONAN movie, and it had occurred to me that a sword-and-sorcery series had never been

"Comics couldn't be so bland and mediocre

attempted on television, let alone Saturday morning. We met, and I proposed the idea. He liked it, took it to the network, and I suppose he got a development deal, since he called me back a week later and asked me to come on staff for a month or so to develop the show. He had formulated a few ideas about what could be done with it, and we designed it very specifically to be workable within the restrictions we knew existed on Saturday morning adventure series. When you tailor a show that way from the beginning, sometimes you come out ahead in terms of the final production. The limitations have all been dealt with from the outset, and the ways around them are built into the concept, so you don't find yourself constantly having to overcome some new and unexpected complaint from the censors. For example, we knew that we wouldn't be allowed to show sharp objects on ABC, so we invented the Sunsword and Ookla's "stun-bow" with the arrows that look like they have rubber suction tips. That was a bit of an in-joke, a perfectly deadpan parody of the restrictions.

DAK: *How many episodes did you write?*

STEVE: I don't remember exactly how many had my name on them as writer, because, as story-editor, I worked extensively on all of them. The pilot, "Secret of the Black Pearl," was entirely mine. I collaborated with **Marty Pasko** on "Attack of the Amazon Women" and "Raiders from the Abyss," and with **Chris Vane** on "Mindok the Mind-Menace," or whatever that story was finally called. And I wrote the outline for "Fortress of Fear," a second-season episode that **Pasko** scripted. Other than these, I honestly don't remember which ones I actually wrote as opposed to rewrote or edited. It gets very hectic during a production season. All you really recall when it's over is that you're very tired.

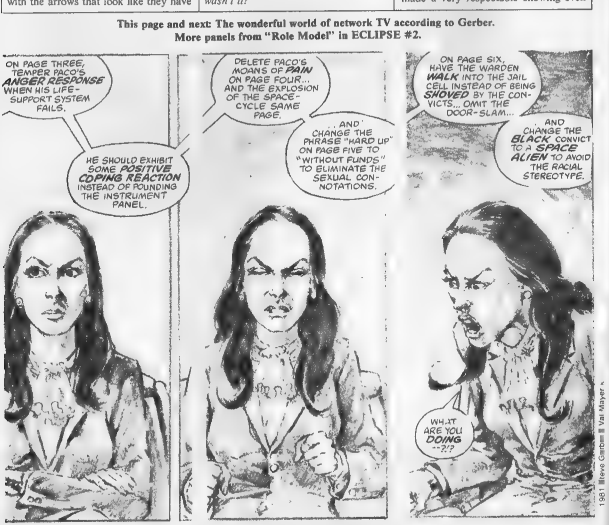
DAK: *It was a fairly successful series, wasn't it?*

STEVE: For the first year. The second year, we were pre-empted by football for the first three months, which decimated the ratings. Then, they started playing "musical timeslots" with the show. it would be on at 11:30 one week, and they'd panic because the ratings were low and change it to 10:30 the next week and 8:30 two weeks after that. Right now, I think the show is on at 8:30 back east and 10:30 on the West Coast.

DAK: *I watch so little television that when I do watch a series, then I want to know when it's going to be on. DALLAS, which I started liking in its first season, used to be on Sunday nights. Then they moved it to Friday, then they began switching the times, and it drove me crazy. I no longer bother to watch it.*

STEVE: THUNDARR has been cancelled, and I think that's exactly what killed it. I saw the ratings last week, and we made a very respectable showing even

This page and next: The wonderful world of network TV according to Gerber.
More panels from "Role Model" in ECLIPSE #2.


ON PAGE THREE, TEMPER PACO'S ANGER RESPONSE WHEN HIS LIFE-SUPPORT SYSTEM FAILS.
HE SHOULD EXHIBIT SOME POSITIVE COPING REACTION INSTEAD OF POUNDING THE INSTRUMENT PANEL.
DELETE PACO'S MOANS OF PAIN ON PAGE FOUR... AND THE EXPLOSION OF THE SPACE-CYCLE SAME PAGE.
AND CHANGE THE PHRASE "HARD UP" ON PAGE FIVE TO "WITHOUT FUNDS" TO ELIMINATE THE SEXUAL CONNOTATIONS.
ON PAGE SIX, HAVE THE WARDEN WALK INTO THE JAIL CELL INSTEAD OF BEING SHOVED BY THE CONVICTS... OMIT THE DOOR-SLAM...
AND CHANGE THE BLACK CONVICT TO A SPACE ALIEN TO AVOID THE RACIAL STEREOTYPE.
WH..T ARE YOU DOING ...?!?
1981 Steve Gerber ||| Val Mayerik

if editorial people didn't want them that way."

against THE SMURFS, which is a big hit and is our opposition on the East Coast. I was astonished at the ratings, that they were so good. Only one interpretation of those numbers made any sense to me. The show must be pulling a gargantuan share of the audience west of the Rockies, where it's on at a time when the audience for THUNDARR — the older kids — is *awake* to watch it. Back east, I suspect the numbers for this year are as low as ever.

DAK: *How many seasons was it on?*

STEVE: Two.

DAK: *How many episodes per season?*

STEVE: Thirteen the first season, eight the second. This is another semi-suicidal network policy. They figure if a Saturday morning show is a success, it's not necessary to order another season of thirteen new episodes. They "freshen" the show with as many as eight or as few as three new episodes a year. The first thirteen THUNDARR have been broadcast now six or seven times! Need I say that this hampers a show whose most basic elements are suspense and the element of surprise inherent in a new, mutated world?

DAK: *I heard something about a possible THUNDARR syndicated comic strip. . .*

STEVE: We've put together a sample of the strip, drawn by **Jack Kirby**, inked by **John Dorman** and **Kurt Conner**. John and Kurt are storyboard artists at Ruby-Spears. They're also excellent **Kirby** inkers and very good pencillers in their own right. We'll be taking the sample package around to the syndicates.

DAK: *So it might turn up in the papers. Is there any talk of a TV special?*

STEVE: There have been discussions off and on about a network special or a film for cable or even a feature film based on the series. Nothing is definite, though, that I know of.

DAK: *What else are you excited about?*

STEVE: Personally, you mean? I just moved into a new apartment, a little larger and a lot more comfortable than the one I'd been living in for the past five years. I recently got a bargain on a Xerox 850 word processing system that I hope is going to make the purely mechanical side of writing a lot easier. You can do *anything* to a manuscript — cut it, move it around, revise it, delete words, change characters' names throughout the entire script — with the touch of a couple of buttons. Prior to this, I'd been working on an IBM Selectric-III, with the self-correcting feature. I thought *that* was amazing, the feather-light touch and not having to reach for the Liquid Paper and the Ko-Rec-Type every twenty-seven seconds — but after working on the w.p. for a couple of weeks, even the IBM seems to type in slow-motion. I'm still a bit intimidated by the sophistication of the system, but I'm getting used to it, little by little.

YOU HAVE JUST BULLDOZED EVERY EMOTIONAL PEAK AND EXCISED EVERY MOMENT OF SUSPENSE IN THOSE SIX PAGES.
WHAT ARE WE CREATING HERE--A TV SHOW OR A BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION COURSE?!?
1981 Steve Gerber & Val Mayerik

DAK: *Are you going to use it to do scripts for TV?*

STEVE: Sure. Everything. I wrote most of DESTROYER DUCK #2 on it. I'll edit this interview on it, too. I'm hoping it will make me fast enough to do a lot more freelance work — so I can maybe pay for the lawsuit before I die.

DAK: *The technological revolution is incredible! You can hook up a word processor to the telephone system, and have one computer talk to another one and completely bypass the mails. We're living in the future.*

STEVE: What's really remarkable is that the technology is no longer exclusively the province of Bell Telephone and ITT — ordinary humans have access to it. **Roy Thomas** and **Gerry Conway** live thirty miles apart, but they've bought compatible word processing systems, I hear, and they do their collaborations by transmitting a script by phone from one machine to the other. One will do a rough draft, feed it into the other's word processor, and then that person will do a polish and send the revisions back the same way. It's true. We *are* living in the future. Everything from the Atari home video games to the personal computers available for under a grand — all this will be changing the way people live in ways I'm sure we haven't even started to imagine.

DAK: *Also, television will fall out of the control of network TV and into fragments.*

STEVE: TV and comics are undergoing very similar kinds of changes at the moment. The advent of cable and direct satellite transmissions has made "narrowcasting" a reality. You no longer need an audience of forty million people to make a television program profitable. With so many choices available, there's not even any reason to settle for the "least objectionable program" on TV. You're not even limited anymore to what the broadcasters or the cable want to feed you. There's also the option of videodiscs and cassettes, or going out to the movies, or shutting the fucking box off altogether and reading a book. The joke around L.A. a couple months ago was, "Hey, see the latest ratings? ABC came in first, CBS came in second, and Atari came in third." there's some truth in it.

DAK: *Technology is interesting. Just when you thought transistor radios were passé', the Japanese re-invented them in the Walkman.*

STEVE: Which may be an innovation we could've done without. But it's true, the advances and changes are coming so

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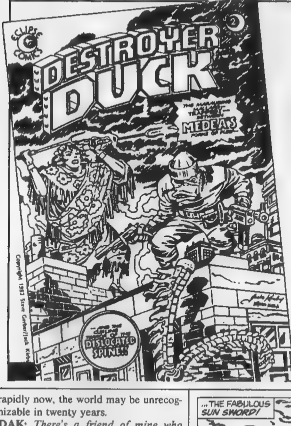

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rapidly now, the world may be unrecognizable in twenty years.

DAK: *There's a friend of mine who writes paperbacks for Del Rey Books and was born a couple of years before the turn of the century. To think of the things he's seen in his lifetime!*

STEVE: My father was born in 1916, and the changes he's seen have been more tremendous in scope than the things that you or I will see. His lifetime already spans from bi-planes through man-on-the-moon to space-shuttles and microprocessors. We came in on the tail-end of that. Aircraft was already pretty sophisticated by the time I was born. The German V-2 missiles were already a reality. By the time I was six, DNA had been discovered, and I've been living with real space satellites since I was ten years old. Of all the changes that have occurred since I was born, only genetic engineering and silicon chips came as any big surprise. All the rest seemed like part of a relatively predictable technological evolution.

At the opposite end of the Gerber spectrum, there's my daughter, who's eleven years old. Do you realize that means she's never know a world in which man *hasn't* had the capabilities of going to the moon or jetting cross-country in under five hours? Her perception of the world has to be vastly different from yours or mine, let alone our parents'.

Art by Win Mortimer from Western's unpublished THUNDARR #1.

DAK: *I think we may live to look back on these days as primitive times. Of course, there's always the other alternative — complete nuclear destruction. Are you any less pessimistic these days than your stories indicated in times of yore?*

STEVE: No. A direct answer to a direct question. I'm not sure that we've figured out yet that no one can win a nuclear war.

DAK: *That's what scares me.*

STEVE: There are still people who believe that there's such a thing as a *limited* nuclear war. That there's a difference between tactical and strategic nuclear weapons. That the environment could withstand the punishment of several thousand hydrogen bombs exploding all over the face of the globe in a matter of a few hours, or, to be extremely optimistic, a few days. Read **Jonathan Schell's** *The Fate of the Earth* or a book called *Nuclear War: What's In It for You?*, by the Ground Zero organization. For sheer horrific value, they've got any three **Stephen King** books beat by a mile. Our leaders are talking about total annihilation of the planet. Ronny and Yuri can't seem to get on the phone and just agree to do away with all the bombs, even though they ought to know that if nuclear war comes, both of them will certainly be among the first to die. We talk about nuclear insanity. I think the problem may

"This is the age of the alibi. . ."

cut even deeper than that. We may have bred — or educated — some kind of basic animal survival instinct out of ourselves as a species. My mind is wandering back to what I said about the television censors. . .I get tongue tied trying to talk about all this.

DAK: *That's why, in a way, people seek out comics and escapism.*

STEVE: Horseshit. People seek out escapism because they're too lazy and too cowardly to think or confront reality. And by removing themselves from any participation in the world, they absolve themselves of any responsibility for what happens in it. This is the age of the alibi, Dave. When the bombs start dropping, there will be millions of Americans whose only thought before they're vaporized will be, "It wasn't my fault." Isn't it a pity that ICBM's aren't sharp objects and that we can't just turn the censors loose to ban them?

DAK: *Do you still read any of the comics?*

STEVE: Very few, very occasionally, to try to keep up with what's going on in the field. I usually pick up a stack at the local comics shop, leaf through them, and throw them away a couple minutes later. I don't want them in the house. I'm too disappointed with what I see.

DAK: *Why?*

STEVE: Lack of creativity. Most of them look like recycled 1960's comic books. The inking may be slicker, new names in the credit boxes, some nice special effects like the "held colors" here and there — but other than that, you might just as well be reading a reprint of the mid-1960's THOR or SPIDER-MAN or SUPERMAN. In fact, chances are, you'd enjoy the twenty-year-old story more. Less contrivance. More spontaneity. In the old days, the artists and writers were more concerned with the characters, the stories, and occasionally even with trying to *say* something, rather than with impressing the hell out of the fans.

You're seeing in comics now the same phenomenon that wrecked popular music after rock artists began to take the reviews in ROLLING STONE too seriously. Pandering to the tastes of the critics and the people who write to the letter columns. Faddishness. Pyrotechnics. De-emphasis of content in favor of technique. I wonder whether the Claremonts and Byrnes and Millers realize how fickle their public really is. Miller probably does. From talking to him, I think that he, of all the members of the new pantheon, probably has both the greatest *aversion* to the superstar syndrome and the best understanding of how it works. The others are going to be taken by surprise when the fanzines turn against them, as they must, and the sales of their books start dropping, as *they* must, and their clout with editors starts to diminish, as *it* must, eventually. There was a time when people like myself, **Steve Englehart**, and **Don McGregor** were accorded the same kind of treatment, when we were the superstars. It doesn't last forever, for anyone. The thing about our old triumvirate, though, is that we three were singled out for our *breaks* with tradition, rather than our slavish adherence to it. Current wisdom has it that that is now unthinkable, that the only viable commercial and artistic direction is in trying to recapture past glories.

The *other* peculiarity about that period is, of course, that Steve, Don, and I are all *writers*, not artists. **Englehart's** greatest acclaim came from his work on CAPTAIN AMERICA and DR. STRANGE. On the latter, he had **Frank Brunner, who** was a fan fave, drawing the strip. On the former, he was working with **Sal Buscema**, who may be the most underrated artist in the business. CAP was *still* a critical success. By the same token, I think most fans took **Gene Colan** for granted until his work on HOWARD THE DUCK.

Rough character designs of STEWART THE RAT sketched by Gene Colan, with Steve Gerber's handwritten notes.

GOOD WORKUP — THIS ONE'S A FAVOR
LET'S GET!
1
2
3
RATS WILL NEED RAT EARS ON RAT'S UNIFORMS
Here a couple of suggestions —
1) Keep back teeth slightly smaller if you prefer, but take the teeth if a front is very necessary.
2) Emphasize tail whenever possible — this is one of the most flattering features — as long as it isn't bent like tip of nose — should have a long pink snake wriggling around behind him
3) Maybe have 5 figures of "Stewart" and "Tiny" alone at different footages — should be smaller, more proportionate, not quite so exaggerated. Only the hands and feet proportion to body

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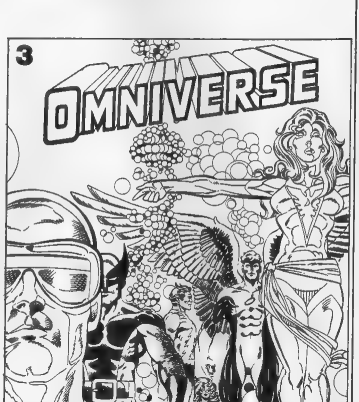

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"There's more than enough blame to go around."

These were cases in which the writers actually helped elevate the artists to prominence!

Nowadays, writers seem to feel that they need an artist who is already a fan-favorite in order for anyone to notice their work — and in order to sell a book. And from that, the artists draw the conclusion that they probably don't need writers. They all want to write their own stuff. I can understand that impulse, of course. They're led to believe it's the art and *only* the art that sells the book. In today's market, it may even be true for all I know. But most of the material by artist-writers has been perfectly abominable. On the other hand, most of the recent material by writers has been equally awful, so maybe it's just that nobody knows the difference any more.

DAK: *Do you think that people are just less creative, or that it's due to the sort of encouragement they're getting from on high?*

STEVE: I think there's more than enough blame to go around. Obviously, I don't know much about the inner workings of Marvel these days. I don't really know much about DC's internal affairs, either, despite the PHANTOM ZONE project. All my work with them was done long-distance. In addition to all the problems I've already discussed, about the attitudes of the current writers and artists, I'd have to suppose that since the comics look and read the way they do on a consistent basis, someone in the editorial departments must approve. The magazines couldn't be so *consistently* bland and mediocre if the editorial people didn't want them that way.

DAK: *Do you have any favorites?*

STEVE: Miller's DAREDEVIL was very good. I'm fond of the **ALL-STAR SQUADRON** book, because the older DC characters have always been vastly more interesting to me than their current counterparts and because I enjoy **Roy Thomas's** writing. The only thing I read regularly is CEREBUS, which is far and away my favorite comic book at the moment.

DAK: *That's interesting, because I think that book has a flavor and ambience very similar to HOWARD THE DUCK in the early days.*

STEVE: I think it's very different.

DAK: *It's different, but it has something I always associated with HOWARD. I'm not sure what that something is.*

STEVE: Intelligence, probably. It's probably one of the two, along with DAREDEVIL, most intelligently-written comics being published today. **Pasko's** SWAMP THING isn't bad, either, by the way. and **Wolfman** is doing some very interesting turns in NIGHT FORCE. Every one of those books also shows an extremely individualistic sensibility at work, too. They don't read like products off the Marvel or DC assembly lines. That may be the other similarity you perceive between CEREBUS and HTD — their *dissimilarity* from everything else. CEREBUS is so well done, it scares me. **Dave Sim** and **Frank Miller** *both* scare the living daylights out of me. Maybe nobody else in the industry has noticed yet, but they really have set new standards for everyone else to meet.

DAK: *What's even more remarkable about CEREBUS is that it's not only a successful monthly book, but they're publishing it themselves. Comics have certainly changed a lot in the last five years, since you were entrenched in the mainstream.*

This page: Jack (King) Kirby pencils for DESTROYER DUCK.

STEVE: The comic book industry changed very little for about four of those five years. This past year or so, though, starting from the time DC instituted the payment of royalties, everything from that moment on has been an entirely new ballgame. I can't keep pace with what's going on anymore. People are making jokes, like what's the top rate this week? Will they give you points in SUPERMAN III if you create a new character? "Attention K-Mart writers and artists! There is a blue-light 12% royalty deal going on in the horror-and-mystery-book department for the next five minutes only!" It's totally crazy! I have never seen an industry turned on its ear so quickly.

DAK: *Why do you think that is?*

STEVE: I think it's because of Eclipse and Pacific entering the four-color comic book market. I don't think it would have happened if not for those companies. Now, of course, there's also First Comics, and there's every indication that the proliferation of comics publishers won't stop there.

DAK: *So you think it's just competition?*

STEVE: I think it's *mostly* that. And the advent of the direct sales market — which meant that you didn't have to be distributed by Curtis Circulation or Independent News to get a comic book onto a rack. And, possibly, in a *very* indirect way, my lawsuit may have had something to do with it, by raising the consciousness and the eyebrows of some artists and writers in the field. I think people have seen from what happened to me, what *could* happen to *them*. Fewer and fewer people are willing to sit still for that.

DAK: *Speaking of alternatives, is DESTROYER DUCK now on a regular basis?*

"I wonder if the Claremonts, Byrnes & Millers

STEVE: DESTROYER DUCK is *not* an "alternative," any more than CASPER THE FRIENDLY GHOST is an "alternative." It's a 32-page, four-color comic book—written, pencilled, inked, lettered, and colored by some of the top people in comics, printed on the same presses at Sparta — but which is published by a company, Eclipse Enterprises, that just happens *not* to be Marvel or DC. It's different in only one respect from the average Marvel or DC book —it's a whole lot more interesting and more unusual. We've come to a very strange point in history when we describe a comic book pencilled by **Jack Kirby** as an "alternative."

DESTROYER DUCK is published by an *independent* publisher, that's all. That just means that Eclipse doesn't need the help of a conglomerate to produce comic magazines. The same is true for SABRE, MS TREE, CAPTAIN VICTORY, STARSLAYER, E-MAN, and the rest. It means, too, I hope, that the reader can expect something a bit less homogenized from these books, but there's no reason at all to saddle them with a label like "alternatives" and make them sound so intimidating and self-important. The real reason they *are* important is that they encroach on what was the province of only two large companies for twenty years. Real, honest-to-gosh comic books, without the artsy-fartsy pretense of HEAVY METAL, without the compulsive grossness of so many underground. They're books by people who *always* broke new ground, in one way or another, even when they were working for the majors. Now that these same people are with the independents, I think we're on the verge of a new era of creativity in comics. It hasn't happened yet. The independents are still feeling their way, getting their sea legs. . .mixing metaphors. But it's coming. DESTROYER DUCK is just the beginning.

Kirby's told me a little about his new book for Pacific, and it sounds terrific. I know a little about what First is planning for E-MAN, and that, too, sounds incredibly different from anything currently on the stands. I'm developing several new features myself— some of them *superhero* features — that I'll be submitting to the independents. These independents are *redefining* the mainstream, Dave! That's what all this tempest in the industry is *about*. It's the one thing the majors never anticipated and never prepared for.

Anyway, to answer your question. . . yes, we're set to do six more issues of DESTROYER DUCK. If those six are successful, I assume we'll do six more and six more after that.

DAK: *How did the first one do?*

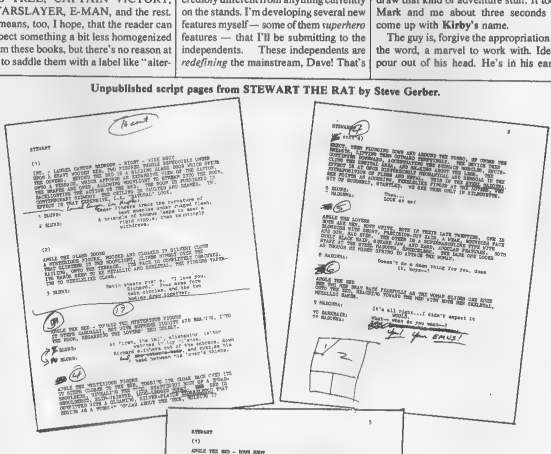
STEVE: The first one did very, very well.

DAK: *I can't help wondering what it's like to work with Jack Kirby. If there's a quintessential comic book artist, it's him.*

STEVE: It's wonderful working with him. We met in 1979 when he came in to do some production drawings on THUNDARR. It was my idea and **Mark Evanier's** to bring him in on that project. **Alex Toth** had done the earliest THUNDARR drawings, designed the characters, basically, and then for some reason, left the project. To this day, I don't know why. The studio was looking for someone else who could draw that kind of adventure stuff. It took Mark and me about three seconds to come up with **Kirby's** name.

The guy is, forgive the appropriation of the word, a marvel to work with. Ideas pour out of his head. He's in his early

Unpublished script pages from STEWART THE RAT by Steve Gerber.



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realize how fickle their public really is."

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"The creative freedom I want is in comics."

sixties, and he has the energy of a 25-year-old. It's all I can do to contain him on the page, so that the material retains some semblance of my own style and my own identity. Because our approaches are so different, our collaboration is like a tug-of-war between two equally-matched opponents — say, Howard the Duck and Oberon. He's pulling one way, I'm pulling another, and out of the tension comes something vastly different from anything either of us has done before. We stretch one another creatively, and that's the best that can come from any collaboration.

DAK: *Do you have another project in the works for Eclipse?*

STEVE: Not specifically for Eclipse. I hope to be working with several publishers in the months and years to come. The projects I'm working on now are all still in the embryonic stages. None of them have homes yet. Where they will wind up, I don't know.

DAK: *You did STEWART THE RAT for Eclipse. Any plans to pick that up?*

STEVE: Correction. I did STEWART for *me*. They published it. **Dean Mullaney** would, I think, agree with that statement. It's intrinsic to Eclipse's entire publishing philosophy. Anyway, yes, there are some sub-plot elements in the DESTROYER DUCK series that may relate back to STEWART, and the RAT could just make a cameo appearance in an upcoming issue. Sub-plots. Actual sub-plots. Do you have any idea what it's like for me to be dealing with an actual sub-plot these days?

DAK: *Having been in comics and moved into animation, where do you see yourself going in the future?*

STEVE: Rapidly downhill. (Laughter) My inclination is leaning back to comics. I've missed the creative freedom terribly. There are a lot of things I want to do that are impossible on television, let alone in Saturday morning. If you've seen THE GREATEST AMERICAN HERO, you know what their idea of a superhero is. If you've seen any of the issue-oriented shows, like QUINCY, LOU GRANT, you know what their idea of serious drama is. My standard reply when I'm asked about getting into prime time is "Why? What's any better about writing cartoons with live actors?" The standard comeback, of course, is: "The money." And that is very true. As the only writers in Hollywood who aren't under the aegis of the Writer's Guild, animation writers are the lowest-paid of any in television. We don't get residuals, either. We're represented by a Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists Union, and we're not even acknowledged by the union as writers; they call us "storymen." This is an outmoded legacy of the days in animation when most cartoons were six-minute shorts and most of the writers turned in their material as storyboards. That situation doesn't obtain anymore. An animation script today looks exactly like any other film script. There are minimal differences in terminology regarding camera movement. That's it. Anyway, this grand and glorious union of ours has managed to keep animation scripts so cheap for the producers for so long that the money in comics is now starting to become competitive. And there is probably more creative freedom to do serious, personal stuff in comics now than in television or even feature films.

I take a kind of perverse pride in being the only writer in Hollywood who *isn't* working on a screenplay. I would rather create properties for comic books and let the movie and TV people license them from *me*. Then they can do with them whatever they will — and they will, if they do; I'm sure you've seen SWAMP THING — but the creative freedom I want is in comic books. It's not in movies or TV. As I said, I have a couple of projects I'm working on, and I've discovered a couple of new artists out here that I'm interested in working with. These are people the New York comics establishment hasn't heard of yet, and they're as good as, or better than, most of the artists working for the majors.

DAK: *Would you go back to the major companies?*

STEVE: I'll work with anyone who's interested in working with me — on terms that I can live with. Eclipse and I have a very good relationship, and I'm sure I'll be doing more stuff with them. I did THE PHANTOM ZONE, and there was another mini-series in the works with DC that fell through because we couldn't reach what I considered to be an equitable deal. I don't hold that against them. It was a negotiation that fell apart, and that happens sometimes. At the San Diego convention, I was approached by every major and every major independent comic book company extant at the moment — that week — to do work for them. Even Marvel.

DAK: *You sound more satisfied than when you were in New York. That must have been a hectic time for you.*

STEVE: It's still hectic. I've grown up a lot. I thought the times in New York were going to be the toughest times I'd ever experience — and oh, God, was I *wrong*! Some things have happened to me out here, some of them as a result of the thing with Marvel, that have made life much

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"I was tagged The Harlan Ellison of Comics. I had a rep. But I never punched anyone."

more difficult than I had known in New York. Having come through that, it's made me a little tougher.

DAK: *Better able to roll with the punches.*

STEVE: And more willing to punch back.

DAK: *You never struck me as someone who wasn't willing to punch back.*

STEVE: Yeah, I know. The Crazy Gerber legend. I was tagged "The Harlan Ellison of Comics" for a while. I had a rep. But I never punched anyone back there. Never even threatened to. There were a couple of yelling matches with editors, sure, but nothing that wasn't forgotten the next day.

Not long ago, I asked **Roger Slifer** what he remembered as the single most violent act he ever saw me commit. He said that once, in the course of a heated argument, I smacked a rolled-up poster against a file cabinet. That was it. My God, the censors might even allow *that* on Saturday morning!

DAK: *My earliest memory of you, back when I was working as an assistant editor under Roy Thomas— and your paycheck situation back then was frequently screwed up — is the day you came in and threw your briefcase down on the floor in a fit of rage, kicking a file cabinet and leaping up and down, screaming. At the time, it was very dramatic. It made an impression.*

STEVE: I did *not* leap up and down. I was too *fat* at that time to leap. I may have waved my hands a bit. You think I kicked a file cabinet, huh?

DAK: *Oh yeah.*

STEVE: Well, big deal. For a company that makes its money by publishing stories about people that destroy buildings with their fists and guys who eat whole planets, this is very minor.

DAK: *It's particularly irksome when they've shorted your paycheck. Together with the fact that you're living like a rat in a cage in New York — there are so many people, you're so crowded and rushed, and there's always the pressure of people impinging on your space. Not getting your check can be the thing that sends you over the edge.*

STEVE: Now, was I the only person you remember behaving that way in the office about the same matter?

DAK: *No, and I hesitate to say this, but only a couple of weeks ago, my check was short. It turned out to be just a few dollars. I went out into the street, and a taxicab ran the light — almost running me over, too — and stopped in front of me in the crosswalk. I leaped up on the car and said, if he's going to park here, by God, I'm walking across him. I jumped up and down on the hood and a split-second later, I thought: I shouldn't have done that. I mean, these guys carry guns and who knows what else. The guy was a Vietnam vet and made threats about how people had been killed for less.*

STEVE: The difference is, you were smart enough to get out of the office first. You only got a bad rep with one stupid cab driver you'll never see again.

DAK: *When are you coming back to New York?*

STEVE: I don't know. I would like to get back soon. I miss little street scenes like those. I'm under contract with the studio for another year, and after that, I'll have to see. I intend to continue working in animation in one capacity or another. It's strange, because my home is here now. I've lived here longer than I lived in New York.

DAK: *But you're not acclimated.*

STEVE: Not really. I would like to try New York again.

DAK: *Watch out.*

STEVE: Yes. Gerber's back and the comics have got him. Pending negotiations, of course.

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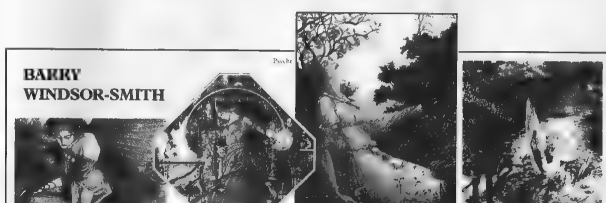

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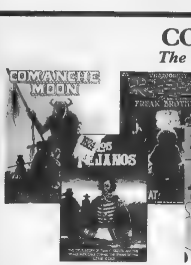

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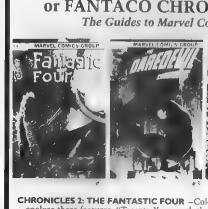

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CAPTAIN AMERICA BRITISH ANNUAL –Steranko'! Here are the three issues written & drawn by Jim Steranko, #s110, 111, & 113 These repre-sent Steranko at his experimental, innovative and exciting best. Cap was always a favorite character of Jim's, and in every sense of the word he really outdid himself on these extraordinary issues. *I regard these as the all-time finest interpretation of Captain America. It's great to see them in a handsome, permanent edition* CABRI-A. HC, 64pg, FC **$3.95**

HULK BRITISH ANNUAL –From the ancient issues of **Tales to Astonish**, The Hulk fights The Glob, The Leader, Mogol, and a shadow of himself. From the team of Stan Lee, Roy Thomas, & Herb Trimpe Plus illustrated story HULKBRI-A. HC, 64pg, FC **$3.95**

SPIDER-MAN BRITISH ANNUAL –Spidey fights The Vulture & Kraven the Hunter from two early issues by Stan Lee & John Romita There is also a new illustrated text story and extra 1-page features Part in two-color, part in full color. SPIDBRIT-A. HC, 64pg, FC **$3.95**

MARVEL COMICS INDEX

Index 9A Index 9B

MARVEL COMICS INDEX –A photo of *every single* cover—story titles, artists, writers, guest appearances, villains, and special comments for *every* story in *every* book. Sharp color covers specially commissioned. Each index is 96 or more pages. Index #1–3 are currently unavailable.

4: THE FANTASTIC FOUR –**Splendid Steranko cover. Issues #1**–180 plus *Annuals, The Human Torch*, and *The Silver Surfer* #1–18 INDEX4-A. **$4.95**

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7B: THE SUB-MARINER –Bill Everett & Dean Motter cover Includes *The Sub-Mariner, Astonishing Tales, Super-Villain Team-Up*, and *The Invaders* INDEX7B-A. **$3.95**

8A: CAPTAIN AMERICA –Glorious cover by Steranko Cap's 40 year career from first appearance in 1940! INDEX8A-A **$5.50**

8B: IRON MAN –Cover by Ken Steacy. Includes *Iron Man & Sub-Mariner, Iron Man, Amazing Adventures, The Inhumans, The Cat, Ms. Marvel, Nova, Omega*, and *Skull the Slayer* INDEX8B-A **$4.50**

9A: THE X-MEN –If you don't yet know what this one is about, you're from another planet. Probably the most long-awaited publication this year, this is a complete examination of **The Uncanny X-Men.** From their start as a minor Marvel team in 1963 by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby . . . through those golden issues by Neal Adams and by Jim Steranko in '68–'69 . . . to their resurrection into Marvel's #1 title by Chris Claremont, Dave Cockrum, John Byrne, & Terry Austin! Every cover, every credit, every guest, every villain, every special event, every story . . . it's all here from #1 to #152. Plus a great, *all new* wraparound cover by Brent Anderson, Terry Austin, and Steve Oliff. INDEX9A-A. 112pg **$5.95**

9B: THE DAREDEVIL –Frank Miller's knockout wraparound cover leads off a thick index of everything possible to know about DD Every cover is pictured, complete information on every issue, cross references, etc. Plus indexes on **Shanna, The Human Fly,** and **Black Panther.** INDEX9B-A. 112pg **$5.95**

HOW TO DRAW MARVEL COMICS by Stan Lee and John Buscema – A superior guide to beginning drawing by one of the top pencillers and most prolific artists in comics. All aspects of anatomy, layout, and perspective are covered. Color wrapper HOWTO-C. HC, 120pg **$10.95**

THE MARVEL COMICS ART OF WALLY WOOD –A hardcover filled with beautifully reproduced full color work. Six stories include *The Ghost-Beast, Flight Into Fear, Sanctuary* (wonderful sword & sorcery), and two classic Dr. Doom stories MCWOOD HC, 56pg, FC **$7.95**

MARVEL Continued

PAPERBACKS

THE HULK CARTOONS I –From the very beginning, this collects the popular newspaper strip by Stan Lee and Larry Leiber. A thick book, including the origin of the Hulk. HULKTOON-A. PB, 224pg. $1.75

THE INCREDIBLE HULK MARVEL PAPERBACK –Harlan Ellison and Roy Thomas created the two 1971 stories that appear here in full color "The Brute That Shouted Love at the Heart of the Atom" features a shrinking Hulk by Herb Trimpe and Sam Grainger, while "The Coming of Psyklop" is drawn by Sal Buscema and Jim Mooney. Published by Marvel Comics. HULKPBZ-A PB, 160pg, FC $2.50

STAR TREK MARVEL PAPERBACK –Beyond the TV series and Star Trek: The Movie, here are three full color stories from 1980–81 "Eclipse of Reason," "Like a Woman Scorned," and "Tomorrow or Yesterday" are the work of Mike Nassar, Klaus Janson, Luke McConnell, and Tom Palmer. STPB-A. PB, FC $2.50

PORTFOLIOS

Spiderman Portfolio

THE INCREDIBLE HULK PORTFOLIO –Four full color plates capture the fierce savagery of the giant monster. Larson/Fastner have drawn such scenes as The Hulk battles the Super-Skrull, The Thing, and The Sub-Mariner and his undersea warriors. Shrink-wrapped for protection HULKPORTI-A. 11 x 14, PC $6.95

MARVEL TEAM UP PORTFOLIO 2 –Outstanding plates include Frank Miller and Craig Russell, who together render **Spidey** and Dr. **Strange** in desperate physical and mystical battle, George Perez drawing an outer space fight 'tween **The X-Men** and The Lords of Light & Darkness, and Byrne & Austin doing Spidey and The Silver **Surfer.** Nice work. TEAMUP2-A. 11 x 14, b&w **$5.00**

THE SPIDER-MAN PORTFOLIO 1 –Spidey is put through his paces battling The Lizard and his reptilian allies deep underground. With the Green Goblin on the attack he swings through the murky night. There's a wild battle with Dr. Octopus to save a beautiful gal. And the web-swinger leaves J. Jonah in a very upsetting position! Larson/Fastner have painted four plates that epitomize the action and daring that make Spider-Man a legend SPIDPORT-A. 11 x 14, FC $6.95

THE X-MEN PORTFOLIO 1 –Four full color plates are bursting with flying, fighting, savage heroes and villains . . . in the wildest battles you've ever seen! Artists Larson/Fastner have done a great job with airbrush and color in creating visions of Marvel's greatest superhero team Included is a great portrait of the new X-Men flanked by the legendary original team. The Sentinels, Magneto and the Evil Mutants, Kazar in his jungle land . . . everyone's here! XMENPORT1-A 11 x 14, FC $6.95

SOFTCOVERS

Graphic Novel 1

Graphic Novel 2

X-Men Companion 1

THE ART OF JOHN BYRNE –Yes! For real! We finally have a plentiful supply of this top seller! This book has been completely unavailable for almost a year now, while demand is still very strong. BYRNE-A SOFT, 8 × 11, 72pg, FC $5.95

CAPTAIN AMERICA'S SENTINEL OF LIBERTY –Return to 1941 when Steve Rogers, a ninety-pound Army reject, is transformed into America's greatest secret weapon against the Nazi scourge. Relive the moment, nearly twenty years later, when the Avengers discover him frozen solid in a huge block of ice. Join Jack Kirby and Gene Colan in the finest and most exciting adventures of Capt America CADLK-B SOFT, 7 × 10, FC $4.95

MARVEL CLASSICS –Four excellent new softcovers reprinting the origin stories of Marvel's hottest comics. Now that the **Origins of Marvel** is out of print, here is the only way (unless you can afford the originals) to get the stories that began the Marvel Age! Each handsome softcover is 64 pages with the origin story, a second or third carefully selected tale, and added pages of text and special features. **Captain America Classics** –At the end of World War II, Cap and Bucky were both "killed" by the Red Skull. But here is his resurrection after more than 20 years, direct from **Avengers #4.** Undoubtedly this could be the best story ever produced by Stan Lee & Jack Kirby! Plus John Byrne retells the 1941 origin of Cap. CACLASSIC-A

Fantastic Four Classics –The FF's origin story by Lee & Kirby that kicked off the entire Marvel Age back in 1961. Plus their first battle with the Inhumans, also by Kirby. FFCLASSIC-A

The Hulk Classics –Lee & Kirby's very first origin story from the first **Hulk** comics, the series that only lasted six issues back in the early 1960s. HULKCLASSIC-A

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MARVEL GRAPHIC NOVEL 1: THE DEATH OF CAPT. MARVEL –Nearly every Marvel hero appears in the most extraordinary book of the year. Jim Starlin. MGN1-A. SOFT, 64pg $5.95

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3: DREADSTAR by Jim Starlin –A new, full color saga in the Metamorphosis Odyssey series. Vanth finds himself mortally wounded after his last battle. He's been transported to an unknown planet, run by humans and human-like cat people. Of course, trouble quickly follows and he's soon battling old and new enemies. MGN3-A. SOFT, 48pg, FC $4.95

THE X-MEN COMPANION, VOLUME I –Features never-before-published original John Byrne art from the unused ending of the Dark Phoenix saga, and literally hundreds of crisp, black and white reproductions from Marvel's files! XMEN1-A. SOFT, 120pg $4.95

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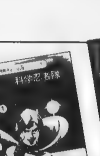
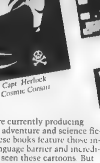
JAPANESE ANIMATION





JAPANESE ANIMATION –The Japanese are currently producing beautiful and exciting new feature length adventure and science fiction cartoons and television episodes. These books feature those incredible animated features. Due to the language barrier and incredibly bad distribution, few in the U.S. have seen these cartoons. But those who have seen them *rave* about the quality.

We feel very fortunate to be about to offer this entirely new line of books. The **Storybooks** actually tell the complete film story, panel by panel, with vivid and colorful cels from the films. *These are in Japanese, but they are very easy to follow without understanding the minimal text that appears.* They also can be appreciated just for the artwork. The **Art Book** series is also based on films, but it uses larger illustrations and includes original storyboards and studies of characters and vehicles.

No phony hype —these are just incredible. If you are reluctant to give one a try, we will be happy to give you a full refund if you are in any way displeased and would like to return the book. Fair enough? I know you'll be pleased. —Bud

BE FOREVER YAMATO –The Yamato is the "Enterprise" of Japanese films; it is a colossal star cruiser that's continually involved in hazardous space exploration and battles. Includes a "Cine Digest" of pages of color cels from a Yamato adventure, close looks at the vehicle interiors, character studies, technical manuals, and more. Large cut-away fold-out. FOREVER. SOFT, 8×11, 122pg, PC **$6.80**

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#2 – CH2.
#3 – CH3 #1 **$7.20**
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GATCHAMAN –Gatchaman is a young, space-age James Bond. These two books present the complete Gatchaman feature film. Packed with exotic weapons and vehicles, beautiful women, and fast action. Excellent. SOFT, 5×7, 160pg, FC

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#2 – GATCHA2. Complete series. each: **$7.50**

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM 35 –Just like one of the amazing Japanese toys you may have seen, the ones that shoot rockets and turn into spaceships and tanks inside . . . that's a Mobile Suit. And this is currently the hottest series in Japan, as a young hero climbs into his super-powered suit and takes on all challengers. A big, thick book, about ½ in color. Beautiful fold out poster. MSG35. SOFT, 8×11, 208pg, PC **$8.90**

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM STORYBOOK –Entirely in full color, these 8×11 deluxe books are the "top of the line" in art & features. These present, as noted below, batches of episodes from the TV series. SOFT, 8×11, 120pg

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MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM III ANIME ART BOOK –Another complete Gundam adventure in the deluxe 8×11, full color format. Gundam battles giant robot-warriors far above the surface of the earth, then to a climactic finale on a cold, lonely asteroid. MSGART SOFT, 8×11, 114pg, FC **$8.80**

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PHOENIX 2772 STORYBOOK –Here, in four parts, is the complete movie that is recognized as one of the very finest animated features to date. A young warrior is trained from birth for a destined encounter, aided by a robot/girl and a strange creature, he must tackle the Phoenix. SOFT, 5×7, 160pg, FC

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#3 – 27723
#4 – 27724 Complete series each **$6.90**

THE JAPANESE FANTASY FILM JOURNAL 12 –Otherwise known as "Everything you always wanted to know about Japanese fantasy films"! An excellent compilation of articles and photos: Ghidrah on Film, Date!: History of the Greater Japan Monster Picture Company, The Superhero: Japan's Interpretation, Godzilla and Post-War Japan, plus many reviews and columns. The covers feature Boris' publicity art for Taiwan's **The Phoenix**, and Rob MacIntyre's battling samurai. Recommended! JFF12-A. 36pg, b&w **$2.00**

JUMBO –Gary Panter's Jumbo is "a sort of punk Everyman . . . with the physique of a brick, the intentions of a saint, the temper of a mad dog, and the brain of, depending on the circumstances, either Tom Swift or a squalide of dubious provenance." In a modernistic, woodcut-like style, Jumbo gets put through the paces: taken to the distant past, into the future, battling "Elvis Zombies" in Japan, and faced with a nuclear bomb in his lap. Strange stuff, all enclosed in *card board covers* with a tipped-on cover illustration. Bizarre. From **Raw Magazine**. JUMBO. 10×14, 38pg **$3.00**

JUMBO COMIC COVERS –Reproductions of those great covers, many with Sheena, the Jungle Girl, from **Jumbo #1–81**. Also included are some early splash pages with artwork by Dick Briefer and Simon & Kirby from **#1**. Artist index included. JUMBO-A. 52pg, OP **$3.50**

KING OF THE KHYBER RIFLES by Talbot Mundy –Set in India and the mountainous regions beyond, this may well be Mundy's best novel. First published in 1916, this illustrated volume includes all the artwork of Joseph Clement Coll . . . dozens and dozens of full page, double page and spot illustrations. Coll has been called America's best pen & ink illustrator . . . in any case, his work perfectly captures the mystic lands and fantastic adventures here. KHYBER-B HC, 7×10, 364pg **$15.00**

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Modesty & Willie in a taut espionage thriller, then up against a band of modern-day pirates.

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Axa among the decadents of Arkady Island and in the women-ruled underwater Sta-Domes.

Mickey Spillane's MIKE HAMMER: The Comic Strip 5.95
Best-selling mystery writer Mickey Spillane's adaptation of his famous detective in newspaper strip format. One of the rarest features of the 50's, it ran in only a handful of newspapers and was cancelled within a year for its excessive violence. Intro by Dick Tracy scripter Max Allan Collins. 8½ x 11.

VALKYRIE!

by FRED KIDA

The beautiful, raven haired Valkyrie only teamed up with Airboy a half dozen times throughout the complete run of *Air Fighters* and *Airboy* Comics. A European Dragon Lady, she led an all-girl crew of fighter pilots for the Nazis, but love and the allied cause drew her to young Airboy's side. Intro by Alex Toth, 80 pages. 5.95

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BY Will Eisner

The SPIRIT Dailies
Here are the complete dailies in a 4-volume set. Wrap around color covers.

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The Spirit vs. Squire Sampson, Sphinx & Kaibosh—and saved by the beautiful Destiny Blake, 32 pages

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This terrific sequence originally ran in daily papers in 1936-7. It was run again as a McKay Feature Book in 1949. Since that time it has been very difficult to get a chance to read about dirigibles, China Clippers, the evil whip-wielding baroness and her dungeons. 80 pages.

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The daring debutante detective featured in Spirit Sections of old is back! Classic "good girl" art from the 1940's

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A fourth volume of **Modesty Blaise** with three more complete O'Donnell/Holdaway stories, 72 pages. **AXA-3**, Jose Luis Salinas' **Cisco Kid**, Raeburn Van Buren's **Abbie an' Slats**. The second volume of Mickey Spillane's **Mike Hammer**. And if you liked **AXA** you'll love her British sister strip **Amanda**!

PORTFOLIOS

***Portfolios** can be very special, very unique examples of an artist's work. Here he is not restricted by an editor; a young audience, a tight deadline, a specific story to illustrate. He can let his imagination run wild and draw what he loves the most and what he is best at doing. Portfolios that are limited editions will not be reprinted and most often sell out within a few months. After this, the price goes upward, sometimes by leaps and bounds! Out of print portfolios generally sell for at least double the original price and sometimes as high as $150 if you can locate a copy. These have most often proved to be among the best investments and most beautiful productions in comic and fantasy art.*

NEAL ADAMS PORTFOLIO A – The first set of three, this includes a sharp full-color slipcover that will accommodate the complete set of twelve prints. Four full-color prints on the highest quality glossy paper. Taken from the original paintings for the Tarzan paperback books, these include a ferocious and unconquered captive Tarzan, Tarzan on horseback battling savage Bedouins, a wild spear-fight with Numa, and an angry Tarzan in the tents of the desert nomads. Illustrated envelope. ADAMSA-A. 11×14 **$8.00**

NEAL ADAMS PORTFOLIO B –Plates five through eight from the above series. Tarzan confronts a beautiful queen and her lost-empire warriors, races into the trees with an unconscious ape-friend, fights savage beast-men armed with only his long knife, and a badly wounded Tarzan staggers toward a final confrontation with bestial priest-men and a mad jungle queen. Four outstanding full-color plates. With an illustrated envelope. ADAMSB-A. 11×14 **$8.00**

ALICE IN WONDERLAND 2 by Frank Brunner –An "Alice for Adults," Brunner's seven plates are an excursion in erotica. Alice has grown to woman but her innocent charm is still evident as she discovers the White Knight, Humpty Dumpty, the lion & the unicorn, and the Jabberwock. The first plate is very, very nice. It is a full color painting of Alice against clouds and a deep blue sky. Behind her floats a luxurious and dream-like castle. This has been mounted on the cover of the light blue slipcase. The entire set is inserted in a nicely illustrated envelope. From a limited edition of 1200, signed & numbered by Frank Brunner. ALICE2-A. 13×17, b&w, 1 color plate **$25.00**

ALPHA-OMEGA PORTFOLIO by Tim Conrad –An astral journey. It begins in deep space, the voyage takes you into medieval black magic rites, early white magic in the American wilderness, and finally into early Egypt, land of pyramids and majestic statuary. Tim, whose work now appears in Epic, has actually *painted* these b&w plates so that each has the tones and subtleties normally achieved only in color paintings. The jet black slipcase is wonderfully illustrated with stars and galaxies floating in a deep space. Limited to 999 copies. Each is signed by Conrad and numbered. His first portfolio, **Daydreams**, went quickly out of print and now is very scarce ALPHA-A. 18×13, b&w **$20.00**

AMBER by Ron Walotsky –Roger Zelazny introduces this portfolio which features five of the paintings from the **Amber** books. Walotsky has created countless covers for paperbacks and numerous record album jackets, besides working for **Heavy Metal**, **Penthouse**, and **Gallery**. Zelazny describes Ron's work as "intricately wrought little medallion-like pieces." Five plates and jacket on high quality chrome-coat paper and in full color. AMBER-A. 15×12, FC **$20.00**

THE ANCIENT TAROT by Frank Cirocco –The Tarot deck has been a source of fascination, wonder, and mystery for centuries. Here, Frank Cirocco uses the Tarot as inspiration for a series of limited edition folios.

"The Ancient Tarot," when completed, will consist of nine portfolios. Included will be 38 cards comprised of the Court cards from the Minor Arcana and all the Major Arcana cards

Each portfolio is limited to only 500 sets and is signed & numbered by Frank. These small sets measure 5½"×7½". An illustrated envelope encloses four plates on heavy parchment-like stock. Black & white. TAROT1-A. **$5.00**

AS A CHILD by Jeff Jones –Beautiful watercolors of a beautiful woman-child. In the midst of graceful white birds . . . asleep by a gentle lily pond . . . covered in fresh, fragrant roses. Jeff's delicate work has been beautifully reproduced on four large, textured plates. A black-and-white drawing adorns the slipcover of this very large 15"×18" folio. Each is signed and numbered from an edition of 1500. Very nice! CHILD-B. 15×18, FC **$20.00**

BLACK WIDOW PORTFOLIO by Paul Gulacy –Six sultry prints of Marvel's sexy heroine, long a companion of Daredevil's. Unique photo-like textures. Enclosed in an illustrated envelope. BWPORT. 11×14, b&w **$10.00**

BLADE RUNNER PORTFOLIO –Twelve full color photographs highlight key scenes and characters from the film of the future. Each is produced on high quality gloss paper and all are enclosed in a full color folder and protective plastic bag. BRPORT. 10×12, FC **$9.95**

THE DREAM COLLECTOR

8 Wondrous Plates: Limited to Just 350

THE DREAM COLLECTOR by Charles Vess –This artist's delicate fantasy work gained national recognition from his appearances in both **Epic** and **Heavy Metal**. Thus large, high quality folio appeared for a short time in 1977 and then disappeared until now. We have purchased the remaining 250 copies and are making them available while they last. *Eight* plates feature scenes from these classic fantasies: Snow White (The Evil Queen), Alice in Wonderland, Jack the Giant Killer, King of Elfland's Daughter (The Coming of Too Much Magic), and The Wizard of Oz (This Sure Isn't Kansas!). Each plate's illustration is also surrounded by smaller vignettes or intricate design work. A very attractive package enclosed in a slipcase and envelope. 18"×17". Signed & numbered by Charles Vess from just 350 copies. DREAMPORT. 13×17, b&w **$15.00**

CODY STARBUCK SIGNED & NUMBERED Chaykin's new color portfolio is available in this deluxe edition. Included is an extra color plate not included in the trade edition, plus a limitation & Chaykin's signature. These somber, well-designed plates portray the space-adventurer and his life of romance and action. Total of five plates. CODYS&N-A 11 × 14, FC **$15.00**

CURSE OF THE RING by Craig Russell –Russell is a leader in the field of fantastic illustration. He has turned his talents toward Wagner's opera and this is the result: minutely detailed fantasy illustrations of heroes, women, barbaric warriors, and alien landscapes. Each plate is reproduced in varying sizes, exactly the size of the original, and printed on beautiful 80lb stock. A personally signed and numbered limited edition of 1200 copies. Enclosed in a large illustrated cover. Accompanied with notes by Patrick Mason. Six plates CURSE-B. 12 × 18, b&w **$12.00**

DEMONS: THE PORTFOLIO –Len Morganti and Keith Tucker, whose animated work has appeared in **Conan, Star Trek II,** and **The Thing,** present the first portfolio. Eight 8½ × 11 plates present views of legendary and terrible demons. Both artists have signed & numbered each of the 1500 copies in this limited edition. Enclosed in an illustrated envelope. DEMONS. 8 × 11, b&w **$10.00**

DISPLACED IN TIME by Esteban Maroto –Neal Adams's Continuity Studio has just released both this and **Wonddreams,** two black & white portfolios that present five plates by each artist. Maroto tells a story of an earthman abruptly transported to an alien planet, where he must battle to stay alive . . . where he meets a beautiful woman . . . and where he finally comes to mesh perfectly with his new, barbaric world. Unlimited printing. DISPLACE b&w **$10.00**

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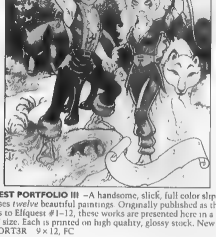

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"X-MEN was a book I had no interest in. . ."

© 1982 MCO

TERRY AUSTIN

Terry had been trying to pry friend and fellow-inker Bob Wiacek out of the Marvel Bullpen all morning — and just when Bob was finally ready to roll, I turned the tables by snaring Terry for an off-the-cuff talkfest. . .

DAK: *Who's your favorite President?*
TERRY AUSTIN: I don't know. For a while I was living with **George Bush's** cousin. I'm not into politics, but I knew that he was going to run for the Presidency before anyone else did. He sent a letter to members of his family asking for a **Billy Carter** type to step forward so that he could gain media coverage, etc. I don't think there were any takers.
DAK: *Did you ever meet him?*
TERRY: No. I was renting a room in a house owned by his cousin.
DAK: *What are you working on now?*
TERRY: I'm in the middle of **Frank Miller's** final issue of DAREDEVIL, inking the same. I'm just about finished with the first issue of THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF INDIANA JONES. I have a new issue of DR. STRANGE coming out by a new penciller I found and brought in to the company, **Kevin Nowlan.** He'd been doing stuff for fanzines that looked real good and I wrote and told him I liked his stuff and asked him if he had ever done any storytelling and he said no. The first person I showed his work to was **Al Milgrom** and he ended up pencilling an issue of DR. STRANGE which, as it happened, I inked.
DAK: *Are you going to stick with those books after that?*
TERRY: I don't believe so. **John Byrne** and I were supposed to do INDIANA JONES, but he split after the second issue because of a conflict with Lucasfilm over his writing. DR. STRANGE is going to be pencilled by **Dan Green**, who wants to ink it himself, which I can understand.
DAK: *So what will you be doing?*
TERRY: Looking for work, I guess.

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Terry Austin
Occupation: Inker
Residence: Westport, Connecticut — right above Bill and Frankie Sienkiewicz
Credits: BATMAN, DAREDEVIL, X-MEN/TEEN TITANS, etc.
Training: Took all the art classes I could. Graduated from Wayne State University in Detroit with either a B.A. or B.F.A. in Fine Arts. The one where I didn't have to take Spanish is the one I got.

DAK: *Going back on the X-MEN?*
TERRY: No, not as long as **Bob Wiacek** is on the book. I was just downstairs telling Bob that he did all the **Cockrum** issues and he deserves a break. Not to say that Dave's a bad penciller, but it didn't seem like he was involved in the book. I got the feeling he was kind of bored. Now they have **Paul Smith** pencilling and he's full of beans and out to show everybody what he can do. It's a good break for Bob.
DAK: *Are you working only at Marvel?*
TERRY: Just the past few days I've been talking with **Dick Giordano** about doing some stuff for DC Comics.
DAK: *He's doing some interesting things over there.*
TERRY: I'm talking to him about inking **Alex Toth,** which is both intriguing and awfully scary. It's strange because I know Alex and am sort of in awe of him and his work. And to be called first thing in the morning by **Dick Giordano** and asked if I want to ink a thirty-page **Alex Toth** job — well, maybe.
DAK: *Is the Pope Polish? How did you break into comics?*
TERRY: At the same time I was at Wayne State, **Arvell Jones** and **Mike Nasser** were also there, although Mike was going to school nights and we never met until we both wound up in New York. Arvell knew I was interested in trying to get into comics. I came to New York and Arvell heard about it and called up **Rich Buckler** for me, who got me in to see

"It was a meeting of all the important people

John Romita, who wasn't real thrilled but gave me some stuff to do for samples. I was trying to get work as a painter for Marvel's magazine covers.

Months later, when John mailed me the samples, he only mailed inking samples. I guess he found this note in his wallet saying, "Send samples to Terry Austin," and the first thing he thought of was inking. He sent me some pencilled xeroxes and I inked them. I ended up moving to New York and brought the samples in, and got nowhere.

However, I had met **Al Milgrom** at a convention in Detroit, which is where he's from also, about a year earlier for about five minutes. I walked out of **Romita's** office one day and he saw me and remembered me, and my name. "Terry! How're you doing? Did you ever go up to see **Neal Adams**?" Because that's what he had told me to do if I ever got to New York. I said that I hadn't and he said he'd take me over there. The first day I went in to Continuity and saw Neal, he thrust this pen and brush at me and told me to work. I was afraid to ask him to go home. So I sat there until 10:00 at night. I was also too scared to ask him to use the phone. The people I was staying with in Westchester thought I was going in for a couple hours and coming right back. They thought I had been killed. I got home at midnight. I was there at 8:30 the next morning and nobody bothered to tell me that no one gets to Continuity until 10:00 or 10:30. He was one of my idols and I didn't dare ask to use the phone.

About a week later I was sitting there working at a job and came in to say that his background man had just left, and asked Neal if he had anybody that could ink backgrounds. I happened to be sitting at the closest desk and Neal said, "How about that guy there?" I was actually in the next room, but I could hear them. Dick said, "Where?" And Neal said, "That guy right there." And Dick said, "Where?" And Neal said, "That guy sitting right there." I'm sitting there trying to pretend I can't hear this.

Dick Giordano

THAT IS WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU, SCOTT, NICHT WAHR?
VIRTUALLY THE SAME, NIGHT-CRAWLER.
YOU TOLD US JEAN WAS DEAD!
IS SHE OR ISN'T SHE?!
1982 MCG/DC

Jack Abel makes news again in X-MEN/TEEN TITANS #1.

Dick came out and asked me if I wanted to do some backgrounds. I worked for him for about two and a half years. Every job he did, I did backgrounds and some secondary figures. There was a GREEN LANTERN job, which is the first I got my name on. I inked all but seven figures. Dick just gave it to me and said to do anything I felt comfortable with. Finally, everyone in the comics field got to know who I was and started to call me for work. Basically, I was too shy to call them.

DAK: *I remember you just suddenly started showing up.*

TERRY: I got a couple of jobs at DC because of the GREEN LANTERNs I did. Al liked the way they looked and asked if I'd be interested in inking some of the stuff at Marvel. His books at the time were GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY and CAPTAIN MARVEL. I did one issue of THE GUARDIANS and he said I could take my pick of his books. I said I liked **Steve Englehart's** writing so I took CAPTAIN MARVEL but, of course, Steve had moved on at that time and I didn't know it. So, I didn't actually get to work with Steve until BATMAN some years later.

DAK: *What's some of the more fun stuff you've worked on?*

TERRY: The stories with **Steve Englehart** and **Marshall Rogers** on BATMAN are probably some of the better stories I've worked on.

STAR WARS was real neat. That was the first time John, Chris and I worked as a team. I used to shore office space with

...THE NEWLY-CROWNED EMPRESS LILANDRA IS HOSTING THE FIRST STATE BALL OF HER REIGN.
NEARBY--UNINTENTION-ALLY LOST IN THE CROWD--IS LILANDRA'S TERRAN CONSORT, CHARLES XAVIER.
1982 MCG

Can you find Popeye and the Phantom Stranger in this scene from X-MEN #125?

in the galaxy, and Popeye should be there."

1982 MCG/DC

The Sailor Man strides along in X-MEN/TEEN TITANS #1.

Bruce Patterson, who was lettering DOOMSDAY PLUS ONE, and thought if I could get a hold of something like John's pencils that I could really do something. Then came the X-MEN, which was fun while it lasted.

DAK: *How long was that?*

TERRY: It seems longer than it actually was. Somewhere in the neighborhood of three years. That was a case of a book I had no interest in, but I liked doing John's stuff. John wanted me to ink MARVEL TEAM-UP, something he's always quick to point out to me.

DAK: *Was Chris involved or were you working mostly with John on it?*

TERRY: It was mostly Chris working with John and I tried to stay out of the middle.

DAK: *You're known in the industry for sneaking "extras" into the background, like Popeye. Are you still doing that?*

TERRY: I haven't done it a lot lately. It got to the point where John didn't like it and he got upset that I would do it. He felt it was fun if it was taken out before it left the office. He felt it detracted from the job as a whole. It got to the point where it bugged him so much, I quit doing it.

DAK: *What were some of the characters you put in?*

TERRY: The one and only time I put Popeye in, it was a meeting of all the important people in the galaxy, and it seemed to me that he should be there. Along with him was the Phantom Stranger. His character is such that he can stand in backgrounds of panels and not do anything and it is okay.

One thing that started in the first SUPERMAN/SPIDER-MAN book was a newspaper headline of the Daily Planet, saying something to the effect that **Jack Abel** had murdered **Howie Chaykin.** That's been going on down through the years. The latest update appears in the latest X-MEN book. Jack made a confession at the trial and he was sent to prison. He broke out and was in Miami and we see a headline that reads, "Abel is still on lam." For a while it seemed I was getting jobs with newspapers lying on tables and I figured if I was going to do something it should tell a story.

DAK: *Have you ever put people in the comics industry in backgrounds or stories?*

TERRY: Yeah, I guess so. There was a CRAZY job I did a few months ago and I used all the editors at Marvel. There was a mob scene and it brought to mind Marvel. The only other thing I do, is when there's a picture on a wall, I have one picture that I always do—it's a penguin surveying arctic waste. It's been on a DAREDEVIL cover, and lots of jobs.

DAK: *You're giving up X-MEN even though royalties seem to be huge?*

TERRY: I kind of got X-MEN'ed out for a while. When Walt asked me if I'd do the X-MEN/TEEN TITANS book, I was weary, but he's so enthusiastic, it's catching. I wouldn't do anything that had to do with X-MEN because I felt like I'd done it all. **Paul Smith's** second or third job with Marvel was a MARVEL FANFARE job that had the X-MEN in it, even though they didn't appear in costume. Al asked me to ink that and I agreed. I felt better about it once I got into it and that made it easier to do the other book.

DAK: *Your look is associated with it, you've really put your own stamp on it.*

TERRY: I guess, but it's been three or four years since I did it. I don't perceive that that's true anymore. I'm sure there are people reading the book now that don't know I had anything to do with it.

DAK: *What comics do you read now?*

TERRY: Not many, these days, unfortunately. I don't seem to have the time. When I want to read something, I grab something with a lot of words.

DAK: *Do you follow any of them?*

TERRY: For a while I would sit down once or twice a year and read twelve issues of all the DC books, then at Christmas, I'd read twelve issues of every Marvel book. I mail my comics to my parents house and I haven't been back there in a long time. I haven't read a lot in the last couple years.

Abel makes headlines in X-MEN #122.

SOME LOOK UP AS ORORO ENTERS; MOST DON'T CARE... TOO FAR GONE INTO THEIR PRIVATE, HEROIN-CREATED FANTASYLANDS, OR DESPERATELY INTENT ON GETTING THERE THEMSELVES.
1982 MCG

TERRY AUSTIN

"THE X-MEN was fun while it lasted. . ."

IN NO TIME AT ALL, HE'S WALKING THROUGH THE DOORS OF THE BUGLE'S CITY ROOM...
...WHERE HE FINDS THE ANNUAL OFFICE CHRISTMAS PARTY GOING FULL BLAST.
SO TELL ME, OL' BUDDY, HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE A MILD-MANNERED REPORTER FOR A GREAT METROPOLITAN TV NETWORK?
I STILL SAY JAMESON WAS A FOOL TO FIRE CAROL DANVERS.*
WAR!
MERRY CHRISTMAS
© 1982 MCG

Jack Abel comes clean — a front page story, from MARVEL TEAM-UP #79.

DAK: *Do you have any favorite funny stories?*
TERRY: I have a terrible memory. I remember **Russ Heath** setting **Joe Barney**'s hair on fire, but I didn't think that was particularly funny.
DAK: *What was the occasion?*
TERRY: I forget. I think he just wanted to see what would happen. Joe wasn't real thrilled with the idea, either. Oh, those madcap days.

THE ABEL-CHAYKIN MURDER CASE

1) *SUPERMAN VS. SPIDER-MAN* #1 (Pg. 9, Pn. 16) -1976
2) *WORLD'S FINEST* #244 (Pg. 6, Pn. 13) - 1977
3) *DEFENDERS* #53 (Pg. 14, Pn. 1) - 1977
4) *WORLD'S FINEST* #246 (Pg. 6, Pn. 12) - 1977 (BLACK CANARY)
5) *MARVEL TEAM-UP* #79 (Pg. 3, Pn. 15) - 1979
6) *X-MEN* #122 (Pg. 19, Pn. 14) - 1979
7) *X-MEN ANNUAL* #3 (Pg. 1, Pn. 12) - 1979
8) *SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL* #13 (Pg. 3, Pn. 13) - 1979
9) *X-MEN/TEEN TITANS* #1 (Pg. 14, Pn. 2) - 1982

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JIM NOVAK

Jim Novak has lettered logos from STAR WARS to CREEPSHOW to our very own COMICS INTERVIEW. He's easygoing, inquisitive, and full of ideas. After a noisy dinner at The Orchid, near Marvel's offices, we repaired to McDonald's to conduct the following interview in relative peace and quiet. . .

DAK: *You've been credited as letterer of almost every series Marvel publishes, at one time or another, Jim. What are some of your uncredited works?*

JIM NOVAK: The SPIDER-MAN newspaper strip, various logos such as POWER MAN & IRON FIST (that's one I remember doing that I felt proud of).

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Jim Novak
Residence: Flushing, Queens, New York
Born: Chicago, Illinois
Occupation: Letterer
Credits: POWER MAN & IRON FIST, CREEPSHOW, STAR WARS, etc.
Favorite Letter: Q

The STAR WARS logo has kind of an unusual story behind it. They brought in their logo from the studio and **Stan Lee** wasn't crazy about it—the "W" was a little bit different looking and the letters weren't Marvel-style. So I ended up redoing it. It was way before the movie even came out. I didn't even know what STAR WARS was, at that point.

DAK: *No one had any idea.*

JIM: At the same time, we were working on the comic adaptation. I lettered the first issue, and I had no idea what that was about, either. The next thing I knew, the STAR WARS logo was being used everywhere, from newspaper ads to some of the promotion and merchandizing materials.

DAK: *You did that logo for Marvel and*

Photo: Michael Plotino

"The next thing I knew, the STAR WARS

it ended up on all the STAR WARS stuff?

JIM: Yeah. It was kind of a suprise to me, because I didn't give it much thought. I was either working on staff or just there that day. I made a few significant changes, but it was basically their design and I Marvelized it, let's put it that way.

© 1982 Lucasfilms

DAK: *Which one do they use now on posters?*

JIM: I think it's my logo. I don't recall seeing the one they probably spent a couple thousand dollars on.

DAK: *And you did yours for. . .*

JIM: Twenty-five dollars. Things have changed since then. Now the financial situation is a lot different. I also recently did a lot of work on CREEPSHOW by **George Romero** and **Stephen King**, produced by **Richard Rubenstein.** King is the writer and Romero directed. It's basically a movie about a kid reading a comic book. His father grabs it away from him and throws it out the window. The wind comes and blows the pages. It stops at a splash page and the camera zooms in, and the movie goes into live action from there. It's made up of five stories, and as each one runs its course, the next segment opens with another splash page, goes to the live action, and then back to the final freeze frame of the comic book. It's very much influenced by **EC Comics**, because both King and Romero were influenced by them as kids.

DAK: *How did they get in touch with you?*

JIM: Jack Kamen was working with them and he's an old-time EC artist who knows **Marie Severin.** He's been out of the comics field for a long time, so he called up Marie and asked if Marvel had a letterer who was willing to do the splash pages and the title of the movie. She referred him to me, and **Tom Palmer** also recommended me. I met Jack at Laurel's offices, the company that made CREEPSHOW. They said they needed something along the order of EC. They first needed a title for the promotion pieces. I went home and designed the CREEPSHOW logo and brought in one sketch which they loved. I did the finish, and that was used for promotion. About a year later, they called back and had gotten all the money for the movie together, and said they needed splash pages, ads and I guess the last page of each story. I worked from slides taken from the film and drew the characters in a comic format and lettered it. Each separate segment has its own title, which I did. I also did some production work on each of the pages.

DAK: *You invented the ad pages for it?*

JIM: Since this was done like a comic book, as the book gets opened by the wind, it would be silly to have a splash page and nothing next to it—because you can see the whole book as the wind blows it. What they wanted was not only the splash page but something facing it. Rather than distract the viewer's eye with more information than was necessary, they wanted filler ads. We came up with five or six single page concepts. One was a muscle man, another a novelty page ad, and so forth. They were done in the tone of the movie. The novelty page has an ad to order an Egyptian mummy for $2,000, and a meat-eating plant that eats the guy's hand, so it's all in the King-Romero school of humor.

DAK: *And you wrote them as well?*

JIM: Yes. Aside from writing ads for certain companies that wanted to advertise in Marvel, I hadn't done any writing at all, except for my own enjoyment. I was kind of surprised at the attitude. They said to work up something and bring it in for them to look at. **Jack Kamen**, did most of the drawing on the ads.

BUM: Can I borrow money to get home?

DAK: *No.*

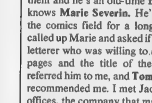
JIM (to bum): Sorry. Anyway, I knew I could handle the paste-up, design and the lettering. The concepts were basically mine and they loved them, so I was really happy.

DAK: *Did you deal at all with Romero and King?*

JIM: I don't think **Stephen King** comes in to the office much, I've never seen him up there. I've seen **George Romero** a couple times.

DAK: *All that attention to detail, and the comic may not be on the screen long enough for people to see these things. . .*

JIM: I know for sure the splash pages will be seen, with my titles. If people see the ad pages, fine. Either way, I know I did them, and I'm happy with the job and they are happy, so that's what counts.



© 1982 Laurel-Show, Inc.

DAK: *There's a huge billboard near Times Square that measures about thirty-by-forty feet. The letters of your logo look like they're at least sixfeet high. . .do you get any feedback from that kind of exposure?*

JIM: It's one thing to sit down and do the work, which I enjoy, but it's another thing to have someone come up and ask me if I did it. It's an instantaneous rush, like I *did* do it. Also to see my work displayed on a billboard, or in a theatre or on popcorn cups, which is also where it's appearing now—it's a rush of adrenalin. Very exciting.

DAK: *I guess that by now you make more than twenty-five dollars for those things?*

JIM: Oh, yeah. The current thinking is now that if someone creates a character—give him a piece of the action. Marvel used to pay a flat rate for logos—twenty-five dollars. Today it's substantially higher and it's tied into where the logo is going to be used. The pay is more if it's to be used on a toy or a film. That makes sense. It keeps me more motivated.

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With the movie work and the work at Marvel, lettering has become very lucrative. I don't want to say how lucrative. When I got to New York, the first job I had was for DC, I worked with **Jack Adler.** As I did the work, I remember thinking I was never going to get anywhere in this business, because it took me three hours to do a page—and, at that time, the rates were four dollars a page at DC. I thought, "I'm never going to make a living, I might as well go back to Chicago." As time went on, I got faster and the rates have improved dramatically. I've had the opportunity to do book covers, more movie work, advertising. But when you take into account the amount of time spent talking to a new client, it takes so much out of me that it doesn't really pay in the end. I'm so busy working in comics, that unless I'm very interested in a film project, I won't spend the time. I'm totally satisfied in the comics field, financially and artistically.

DAK: *What decided you on lettering?*

JIM: I was always interested in every facet of comics. I had and still have a twelve-by-twelve foot room in my parent's basement. I used to go down there and do

logo was being used everywhere. (I got) $25."

the writing, drawing and lettering on a whole book of my own at about age thirteen, fourteen or fifteen. There was a guy who painted signs and he was looking for an assistant.

I needed a job and said I could learn, so he hired me. It was pretty easy for me and I learned to design lettering. And I figured that was a good way to break into comics. I also learned how to use a pen and a brush and got to be pretty good. When I was seventeen, I went to New York and spoke to **John Verpoorten** at Marvel and he said he would let me know about a job. I was getting homesick and moved back. I told him I didn't think that I could hack it in New York. About a year and a half ater, I was working at the sign shop again and was really sick of it, because I had done everything there was to painting signs. That's when I came back to New York, but Marvel wasn't hiring at the time.

I went to DC and got my first job from **Jack Adler** for WONDER WOMAN. I was there for two or three jobs. I worked for **Julie Schwartz.** Then Marvel called me back and **Sol Brodsky** said they had a staff position. I felt it would be to my best interest to work on staff and get the benefit of other people's experience.

DAK: *In the production department?*

JIM: Right. That's when I started to learn about lettering and I got better and better. A few of the people in the field who helped me out are **Danny Crespi,** who took me under his wing; **Irving Watanabe,** who gave me a lot of advice, and whose lettering you hear little about; and **Gaspar Saladino,** purely for style. **Roy Thomas** gave me a CONAN and liked my work. I was on staff almost three years. I thought then maybe I should freelance. Now it's become a very good job. The comics work lead to the movie work and that led to other work. I'm turning away work, but I enjoy comics.

DAK: *Have you given up on drawing?*

JIM: I haven't given up on it. Before I was interested in lettering, I was interested in art. The first real art I ever ran across, besides comics, was a **Salvador Dali** book. I was fascinated by the imagery and thought maybe these painters had something. I had to educate myself. I bought art history and art books, and I still maintain an interest, but my work gives me enough freedom to pursue these things. I consider myself a working professional letterer. It's gotten me further than I ever thought it would take me. I'm not going to give it up. Every once in a while, someone will say they know my work and they'll be in advertising, so how could they know

THE CREATION OF A LOGO

Jim Sallerup's rough idea, sketched on a napkin:

Jim Novak's first interpretation:

Jim Novak's second version:

DAK's suggested approach:

Jim Novak's final version:

"I've got one gripe. It's against fans."

my work. But I guess they do pick up a comic, once in a while.

DAK: *When you were speaking of your credits, you left out Mac-Ray's moving vans. . .*

JIM: That's right. **Ralph Macchio's** family has a trucking outfit, and I designed the lettering on the side of the trucks. I used to paint trucks, race cars, vans, billboards. I got a good background in sign lettering.

DAK: *Do you read the story first or as you letter along?*

JIM: I usually look through the book and see if there are any technical problems, like, is this piece of paper different from that one, or is there any special reference? If it has to do with a circus, I might have to look up a type face that lends itself to a circus *motif.* But I'll just start with page one and work my way through, providing I have the whole book.

DAK: *While you're doing the lettering, do you read and follow the story?*

JIM: Definitely. The spacing and balloon placement has become second nature. All the editing is done by the time I get it, so I don't have to worry about spacing problems. I just enjoy the book.

DAK: *There must be some jobs you enjoy more than others. . .*

JIM: Yeah. There are two problems. Either the artist ran out of Marvel paper, which is of pretty good stock, or the paper has been roughed up for some reason. Then I don't feel I can do my best, because I'm working at a disadvantage. That's on a purely technical level. As far as the writing goes, I don't have any problem if they leave enough space for the balloon. If a balloon has thirty words or ten, it doesn't take that much longer, but if the character's head is one inch from the top of the panel and the writer's made a balloon that's two inches, what am I going to do? With ninety-nine percent of the writers, there's no problem.

DAK: *Are you usually interested in the stories?*

JIM: I get bored, but there are some that actually get me excited. I liked working on POWER MAN AND IRON FIST, because I thought **Jo Duffy** was exceptional at characterization. Those characters really lived. Luke Cage was always real. Another series I like for a different reason is THE HULK, which **Bill Mantlo** writes. I love the Hulk character. DR. STRANGE—**Roger Stern** does an exceptional job with that book. **Ed Hannigan** calls the pencilers on the book artsy-fartsy artists, but usually they turn in a good art job. First there was **Marshall Rogers,** then **Michael Golden,** in addition to **Roger Stern's** writing. I never worked on DAREDEVIL, but I like that. I was almost glad I didn't because I can read the book fresh when it comes to my house.

DAK: *Are you implying that your interest in comics been spoiled by working in the field?*

JIM: My idea of what goes into a comic has changed. When I was a kid, I was overwhelmed by the sense of fantasy and grandeur. Now I can appreciate what went on behind the scenes and like it for a different reason. I now admire the craftsmanship.

DAK: *What do you think of comics in general?*

JIM: I had this discussion with **Al Milgrom.** When I was in the middle of collecting, **Neal Adams** was working, **Barry Smith, Jack Kirby,** and **John Buscema** still is. Aside from EC, which was published before I was born, when I got into comics there wasn't a better selection and assortment. The magic is gone. I can still appreciate **Walt Simonson** or **Frank Miller,** but I'm not in awe of them. Not that they're any less good, it's a different standpoint.

As far as **Jack Kirby** goes, I can only comment on the product I see—CAPTAIN VICTORY. I feel a personal attachment to his work. I did letter a couple issues of CAPTAIN AMERICA that he wrote for Marvel, around 1977 or 1978. I feel his work was better when he was teamed with Stan and with different inkers. I would rather see **Frank Giacoia** or **Al Milgrom** inking Kirby than the people doing it now. As far as the writing, I feel that it falls short of what it could be. It almost seems like a self-parody without the humor. I would like to see someone give him more editorial direction or have someone come in and make it a self-parody, add humor. I read a few issues and I don't find much to interest me. If you compare them to Marvel books by **Stan Lee** and **Jack Kirby,** you always had strong pencils and inks and the grandeur of the prose and story. I think that's lacking now.

I think for the most part the stories in comics are good, but what I find lacking is a diversity of direction. There are more stories that can be done. The total market isn't being explored. An alternative publisher will put out a book, and for the most part I find it to be a re-hash of Marvel or DC stories. I think no one wants to be the first. It's going to take someone with money or initiative or both. Maybe they'll fall on their face, but maybe they'll succeed. Before STAR WARS came out, there was nothing like it. And it's very popular with a cult. There's room for exploration in comics.

DAK: *Anything we haven't covered?*

JIM: I've got one major gripe. It's against fans. I know that they support comics and I make my living because fans go out and buy the comics I work on, but a lot of times they assume things that aren't true. I could come up with a hypothetical situation: say an artist is taken off a book. They don't know the reason, but they hear a rumor, and it's then in the fan press carved in concrete. It bugs me that misinformation goes on. And you know who you are. If you're going to be a journalist, get your facts straight.

DAK: *What else is going on in your life?*

JIM: I will be doing the logo for another film, but I don't think I should say what it is, yet. There are other things, too, that I can't go into.

DAK: *And you were just married.*

JIM: I guess that's more important than anything else. I married a wonderful girl named **Lidia** on July 10th and so far everything is going good. They said it wouldn't last and here it is six months and we're still happy. The best thing is that she understands the pressures I have. No matter how hard you plan you can still wind up having to do half a book over night. It's not your run-of-the-mill job.

DAK: *It's a little like choosing homework as your living.*

JIM: They never paid me for doing homework and they gave me bad grades. I get good grades from comics.

DAK: *Do you think people realize that a letterer is important?*

JIM: In the industry, yes. Writers, especially, and also artists. After an artist spends a lot of time on a page, he doesn't want a letterer coming in and destroying the layout. You can ruin a page by putting a balloon over a guy's head. You've taken the artist's work and destroyed what he's strived for. It's the letterer's responsibility to do a neat, clean job and also to be unobtrusive so that people don't notice it. It's got to be legible, logical and have style. Creative energy goes into the sound effects and title. A lackluster title gives a lackluster introduction to the story.

DAK: *Readers are not all that conscious of lettering. And, if it's good, they shouldn't be. But sometimes the readers won't like a story, without being able to put their fingers on it. They're blaming the story when, in fact, it's the lettering.*

JIM: They'd probably say, well **David Kraft** wrote this story and I didn't like it, so it's his fault. It could be the greatest story in the world, but the lettering can destroy it. It's like watching a movie with a bad soundtrack.

"I've been a fan all my life. . ."

STEVE OLIFF

Blond-headed Steve Oliff blew into the Big Apple, fresh from sunny California, to help color some splashy special projects for Marvel. While in town, he was eager to make a few points about the trials, tribulations and triumphs of doing color work for comics. . .

DAK: *I've heard people outside the industry say, "You mean, they actually pay someone to color these things?" Many people would envy you, coloring comics full time. . .*

STEVE OLIFF: I look back to when I was in kindergarten—I would scribble and fill in the colors.

DAK: *Did you stay within the lines?*

STEVE: Oh, yeah. My lucky break came when I was learning to draw superheroes in the third grade. My mother gave me a full set of Prism colored pencils. That was a real step up from crayons. I could blend and do shading.

DAK: *What do you use now—Dr. Martin's color dyes?*

STEVE: No, I don't. I only use Dr. Martin's dyes for my airbrush. I tend to work exclusively with cel-vinyl animation paint, and water-base felt markers. Cel-vinyl is like acrylics, but flexible, and puts a very flat tone down. I discovered it kind of by accident, because I was into animation. Then I started using it on THE HULK stuff. I use Buffalo markers and these beautiful pens called Stabilayouts, which have a nice chiseled point. I blend them on the stats with Q-Tips to get nice gradations. The reason I got into this is because I don't handle a brush particularly well. I've just recently discovered the value of using Frisket paper to airbrush. It gives a clean look.

DAK: *Can people who color really make a decent living?*

STEVE: Yeah. I don't know, though if you just color regular comics. The pay difference between regular comics and full-color comics is a lot. If you work fast, you can make a decent living.

DAK: *So how does one become a professional colorist?*

STEVE: By going to conventions. I've been a fan all my life, and I got to know some people at conventions. I got connected with **Byron Preiss**. A friend of mine had me color a **Barry Smith** CONAN print and an original **Neal Adams**. Byron saw it and a VENTURE cover—the very first thing I did, for **Frank Cirocco**. He got in touch with me and I worked on the ILLUSTRATED ROGER ZELAZNY, the one **Gray Morrow** did. That faded away and I didn't do anything for a long time. The next thing I know, **Frank Cirocco**, who is a color-blind artist, had me color the LAND OF SHADOWS portfolio, the LORD OF THE RINGS thing. Then Byron got in touch with me about doing an **Alfredo Alcala**-**Tom Sutton** job for the ILLUSTRATED HARLAN ELLISON. That came out in HEAVY METAL at the same time the LAND OF THE SHADOWS portfolio was published by Pacific. Suddenly, people knew I existed. One of those people was **Howard Chaykin,** who is another color-blind artist and who does real well with color despite the fact. He was doing THE STARS MY DESTINATION. I saw him at San Diego and he liked my stuff and decided he wanted me to work on it with him. We later talked by telephone, and he said Byron was willing to fly me to New York and put me up and pay me peanuts.

D. JON ZIMMERMAN: *An offer you couldn't refuse.*

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Steve Oliff
Residence: San Francisco
Born: Castle Air Force Base, Merced, CA
Occupation: Colorist
Training: Self-taught
Credits: MOON KNIGHT, HULK, CAPTAIN VICTORY, DEATH OF CAPTAIN MARVEL, etc.
Favorite colors: Brown and gray

Modeling for a Bill Sienkiewicz story "Professional Golfers on 'Ludes" - for NATIONAL LAMPOON magazine.

"So often you put all this beautiful work

STEVE: Right. Howard didn't have a lot of money, himself, so he didn't pay me much. But he showed me around so I didn't get killed immediately and he said he had connections. He took me up to DC and to Marvel. THE HULK magazine was just starting in full color. They had done one issue so far. This new kid, **Bill Sienkiewicz**, had just turned in his first MOON KNIGHT job and they needed someone to color it. Then I started working regularly on THE HULK, and that's how I got into comics.

DAK: *You're not working exclusively for any one company—you basically freelance everywhere?*

STEVE: Right. I worked exclusively for Marvel until THE HULK was cancelled. Then I didn't know what to do, because I had all my eggs in one basket.

Z: *Are you also an artist?*

STEVE: Yes. I lean toward a kind of cartoon realism. It's not really a straight-forward comics style, it leans toward animation. I like funny-animal art—I just call them "critters."

DAK: *Have you got anything in the works?*

STEVE: Yes. I illustrated, lettered, and helped write a children's spelling book for a small company in Northern California called Continuity Press. It's by a man named **Herb Kohl**, who has written lots of educational books. He has something like thirty books to his credit. In connection with him, I started working for Reston Publishing, which is a division of Prentice-Hall. He's been working on computer books. And through him, I illustrated a book called ATARI GAMES AND RECREATIONS. I created a couple of little space characters in that. Since then, we've contracted to do another book on how to use a computer for the average person. I'm helping write and doing all the illustrations for that.

Z: *Has your work as a colorist for comics influenced your own art?*

STEVE: It has. By being a colorist, I get to work with a lot of different people, in a lot of different styles. Also, I've gotten to meet people I never would been able to meet by working on projects. I'm happy with it.

Z: *Petra Goldberg, a colorist for Marvel, said that coloring for comics allowed her to see color in a new way, when she was doing her own paintings. It enhanced her use of color, she said.*

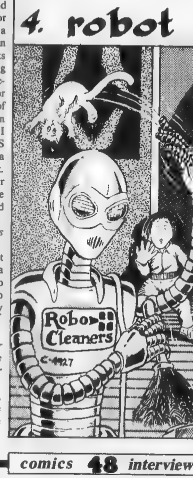
STEVE: It hasn't changed my color sense, but I am technically better because I've done so much of it. I'm fortunate, because a lot of the techniques we've been using, I've had a hand in. So I've been helping to develop them as we go along.

DAK: *When you started coloring, were you familiar with the reproduction process?*

STEVE: I had no idea what I could do. I'm constantly trying to do more than I'm able, as far as reproduction goes.

DAK: *Craig Russell once did this incredibly beautiful coloring job on an issue of KILLRAVEN, but it was so intricate that the separators at Chemical said they couldn't do it. . .*

STEVE: That's only been a problem for me, recently. When I first got into the business, I had the luxury of being able to do full-process color. Anything I put down they could reproduce, because they were using cameras to do the separation, rather than doing it by hand, the way regular comics are. Since then, I've done two regular comics for Marvel—an issue of MASTER OF KUNG FU and a BATTLESTAR GALACTICA. As soon as I turned the work in, they said it wouldn't separate. I'm working for Pacific now, doing regular comic-book coloring, and I've learned a lot about simplification. I still push their separators as far as they'll let me go.



DAK: *What's it like, having a comic-book publisher in your backyard?*

STEVE: Pacific is growing so fast that it's hard to tell, but they're all right. The checks are usually on time.

DAK: *That's important.*

STEVE: They're not too good with returning originals. But I think it's because **Steve Schanes** has taken on a lot of work, and the details of running a publishing business are getting passed over.

Z: *They're too new and growing too fast?*

STEVE: Right.

DAK: *Do they have much of a staff?*

STEVE: I don't know. They just moved and expanded and I haven't seen their new facilities.

DAK: *What's it like working with Jack Kirby?*

STEVE: I enjoy him a lot. He's really nice. In some ways it was easier than other people's work because it was simpler, but it was like a dream. Through Pacific I've gotten to work with two of my idols—**Kirby** and **Ditko**.

DAK: *You colored his books much differently than they had been in the past, and also differently than he colors his own work. I've seen art at conventions that he's colored himself, and he'll put bright, vibrant colors side by side on these intricate costumes. You put muddy tones over everything and sort of dulled it, made it look un-Kirby like. . .*

STEVE: I got yelled at for that from everybody. That's why I'm no longer on the book, I think. They said I did too many dark tones which, in some ways, I agree with. There were things I thought would work, that would look good on the stats, but didn't reproduce well.

DAK: *You weren't happy with the way it printed?*

STEVE: Sometimes, I would be ecstatic. It would come out really nice. Other times, it would look terrible. I found out that sometimes it had to do with the printing process, itself. On the regular comics, your yellow plate drops out and suddenly all your colors look strange. Empty. There are places that would darken too much and other places that looked too light. Occasionally, it would balance. Honestly, I think some of the best regular comics coloring I've done has been on a couple of Jack's books. And in the same issues would be some of the worst stuff I've ever done, side-by-side! I don't know what to think about that.

One thing I wanted to say is that a lot of times what gets reproduced is no indication of what was done to start with. I really put my heart into this one WEIRD-WORLD

into something and it turns to mud."

These pages and next: Some samples of Steve Oliff's art from the book he illustrated.

job for EPIC, and it came out really dark and dead-looking. I go into shock sometimes, when I see the end product. So often you put all this beautiful work into something and it turns to mud. A lot has to do with the paper. In one issue of EPIC the first few pages were on slick paper. The colors popped, it looked good, the registration was pretty good, then halfway through the story, it switches to Baxter paper, and it looks terrible. I don't like to see full-process color on Baxter paper. For instance, I was working with **Louise Jones** on the DARK CRYSTAL book last week (that's another weekend job, by the way)—

DAK: *Don't say that. That's my script!*

STEVE: I enjoyed working on it. Thanks to Henson Associates making a lot of corrections, I had a couple of extra days to go back over it. But I have a beef. Coloring is the tale-end of the process. If the writer takes an extra couple of days, and the artist, inker and letterer take a couple of days, all down the line, it gets screwed up—and then the colorist is stuck with, "Hey, we want it yesterday.". You're stuck with cranking it out with no time to think about it.

DAK: *I've heard letterers and inkers complain that the penciller or the writer took too much time and they had to make it up. But you're right, the colorist is at the very end.*

STEVE: We're the very last person. Anyway, Louise was showing me this CONAN movie adapation which was printed on that same paper and color that looked really nice in the original form just got soaked up by the paper and died. If they're going to do those books, they should try to get better paper. Baxter paper doesn't work well for *full-color,* but it works really well for *regular* comic color. I don't think anyone's done a real good Baxter book yet. I'm going to be working on some for Pacific—my first Baxter books—and I'm crossing my fingers that I'm going to be able to do a little better than what I've seen.

DAK: *You worked on THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN MARVEL book, which had good printing on slick paper. . .*

STEVE: That was really a lot of fun. I enjoyed it a lot. **Jim Starlin** broke his hand or something, so it slowed down his coloring. He called me in and I got something that was exciting to look at and fun to work on. Then, when the printing came out, I couldn't believe it. It was the first time my stuff had seen such quality printing. The colors shot right—it didn't turn muddy and dark. I was very pleased.

DAK: *A lot of times, people who read comics don't pay attention to what the letterer does, or the colorist. Since you're a colorist, you look at it much more carefully. Who are some of the best in the field?*

STEVE: I'll start with the regular comics.

I think probably one of the best who has ever been in the business is **Tatjana Wood.** I was looking at some of the Tower Comics stuff she did, and it was fantastic, beautiful. **Michael Golden** is tremendous. His color sense knocked me out. I'd steal, translate, things from him into full-color. I love **Marie Severin's** EC work, in particular. In full-color process magazine stuff, my color influences are not in comics at all. Initially, I was impressed by **Maxfield Parrish,** but after a while some of his work paled on me. I like the way **Bernie Fuchs** used colors. I like the way **Howard Chaykin,** despite the fact that he's color blind, uses color. He's taken more of an advertising and design approach to color. Those are the best that come to mind.

DAK: *I've always had a theory that you could tell a bad colorist in comics by the amount of purple used. It's such a dull color, it kills things. If you go through a comic and see a lot of purple, especially that real dull shade, that's the sign of a bad colorist to me.*

STEVE: You mean that dark purple or the pale purple?

DAK: *Not the pale purple, but the next shade.*

STEVE: I like that color. Oh well.

Z: *Now you know.*

DAK: *What would you say constitutes bad coloring?*

STEVE: The coloring I don't like is either too washed out or has too many primaries competing with one another.

DAK: *The first is the DC style and the second is the Marvel style.*

STEVE: I suppose so. I haven't been impressed with the coloring in comics, generally, except for a few people. The things I like most about Tatjana's coloring are the browns and grays she uses. Those are my two favorite colors. When the printing is good and the inks are good and the paper is good, those work well. I think that's why they've gotten away from using them and stuck to the simpler colors —because the paper and ink quality went down. I don't like to see knock-out red panels. They're effective occasionally, but some people use them too often. It's

"I think there might be a backlash. . ."

just too limiting to do regular comic-book coloring. I'd rather do full-color.

DAK: *Is there enough work?*

STEVE: There's starting to be. There's a more sophisticated market now, so they're branching out with the graphic novels and EPIC and HEAVY METAL. Now days here are almost two distinct lines of comics: the regular comics, which will continue forever probably, and the more fan-oriented specialty stuff.

Z: *Do you think comics will continue to become more adult?*

STEVE: I think so. There might be a little backlash. Again there are the two markets —people who grew up in the early days of Marvel and DC, and that now-adult market is going to continue to expand; while the market aimed at the younger kids will remain the same. I don't think you need to push the younger market with these themes.

DAK: *Anything you'd like to talk about we didn't cover?*

STEVE: I was talking to **Marie Severin** and she said one of the problems she's had as a colorist is a lack of communication between artist and colorist. Artists working in black-and-white are into delineating explosions and shadows that could be done with color. Now I'm working with **Brent Anderson** and I'm able to ask him not to draw in the lines for the ray blast, just to tell me what it's suppose to be; then I can do it much more easily in color. Sometimes there is so little communication that stuff is just dumped on the colorist. For instance, Pacific sent me

a **Steve Ditko** job. He had given them roughs for the color reference for all the characters, but they neglected to send that to me, so I colored it my own way. The artist was unhappy because I did it without any guidelines, doing what I thought was right. I find that general lack of communication to be frustratingly common, and I wanted to make that point.

DAK: *Any big projects in the works?*

STEVE: I have a lot. I'm doing the X-MEN GRAPHIC NOVEL, which is why I'm here in New York staying with **Brent Anderson.** After that, I'm going back to California to finish the computer book. I'm working on a character out of Canada—I won't say the names because it's brand new and just getting started. I just finished a seventy-page full-color job for him. Last year, I colored a hundred and twenty pages for him!

DAK: *Who's the publisher?*

STEVE: The Newfoundland Herald. One is a transcendental superhero, and the other is a regular superhero who gets enlightened as he goes along. The art is by **Danny Bulanadi.**

DAK: *Is this going to be sold in the U.S.?*

STEVE: I'm not sure. It's starting in Canada and hopefully going to filter down to the United States. It looks like I'll be coloring the **David Michelinie-Bob Layton** SORCERER book, too. And just today, **Ron Wilson** spoke to me about possibly working on his graphic novel. Plus some projects of my own.

In the past, I colored a lot of original art for private collections. Now I'm trying to get together a slide show about color in comics to take to conventions. There are a lot of people I can't get in touch with, so if you wanted to mention it, they could drop a note to me in care of your magazine. I just want to get some slides of my work. I've done at least fifty or sixty pages that are in private collections.

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"A lot of people at Whitman feel that it

Photo: Shelleigh Grube

This issue, editor Mike Teitelbaum shares his behind-the-scenes stories of Western comics, giving D. Jon Zimmerman, me — and now, you — an infrequent glimpse into the workings of one of the most overlooked and misunderstood contemporary comics publishers. . .

DAK: *Let's go all the way back to the beginning. How did you wind up at Western?*

MIKE TEITELBAUM: I came to Western pretty much by a lucky break. I was working in an ad agency in a clerical position. After three years there, I got a call from a friend over at Western. He had gotten another job in publishing, and asked me if I was interested in his old one.

I had not kept up on comics. I'd read them voraciously as a kid, from about age seven or eight to eleven. Somewhere in there, I just stopped. There's no clear moment when I remember saying, "I don't like these anymore." Just the interest of running to the candy store each month waiting for the next issue to come out died down. I had a pretty extensive collection which got, unfortunately, thrown out when I went away to college, the feeling being I had outgrown them. It didn't mean much to me at the time, but being back in the industry and seeing what some of the comics are actually worth. . .well, it's like too bad about that. I don't collect today, I just read them for fun.

DAK: *What did you like back then?*

MIKE: I was very into the SUPERMAN line. I read a lot of DCs in the late Fifties, early Sixties. Some of the early Marvels, but my main exposure to Marvel was when the animated TV show came on after school—featuring SUB-MARINER, THE HULK, and SPIDEY, among others. Each day they featured a different character for a half hour. I liked that show a lot. I don't remember being into any funny animal comics, but I remember reading them when I was much younger —when they were bought for me, before I started buying my own stuff.

Anyway, I was intrigued when my friend called and explained what the job was, although at the time I felt luke-warm about comics.

DAK: *When you arrived at Whitman, were you familiar with the characters?*

MIKE: I knew them from animation. I still enjoy the Warner Brothers stuff on Saturday morning. I grew up with **Walt Disney**, like everybody else. The adventure stuff, however, was not familiar to me.

DAK: *What duties did you have over there?*

MIKE: At first, I was given a yearly schedule and approximate due dates. All the books I handled were bi-monthly. The only monthly books there were the Disney titles, and they were all done on the West Coast. All the Warner Brothers titles, with the exception of TWEETY & SYLVESTER and YOSEMITE SAM, were done out there, so New York had primarily the adventure line. Although we also do MIGHTY MOUSE, POPEYE and some others.

DAK: *I love MIGHTY MOUSE.*

MIKE: Yeah. He's not a regular title, unfortunately. I just finished a couple MARCH OF COMICS stories with him. I don't have too much to do with the cartoon characters—except TWEETY AND SYLVESTER, which I've been editing for about two years, and YOSEMITE SAM, which I just picked up.

DAK: *What other books are you editing?*

MIKE: BUCK ROGERS, THUNDARR,

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Mike Teitelbaum
Residence: Manhattan
Born: Brooklyn, New York
Occupation: Editor, Western Comics.
Training: Adelphi University, majored in communications.
Credits: MAGNUS, DR. SOLAR, BUCK ROGERS, THUNDARR, TWEETY & SYLVESTER, etc.

would be a shame to discontinue comics."

MIKE TEITELBAUM

SOLAR, MAGNUS, TWILIGHT ZONE (but that's all reprint), GRIMM'S GHOSTS, SHROUD OF MYSTERY, SHADOW PLAY, and such earlier illustrious titles as HAPPY DAYS and BATTLE OF THE PLANETS.

DAK: *What happened to Gold Key comics—when did they become Whitman?*

MIKE: There is no more Gold Key. They're all Whitman, which was the products division of games and toys; when we stopped going single copy, the comics were grouped in with the other Whitman products.

DAK: *Tell us about the current comics "implosion." What happened at Whitman?*

MIKE: Unfortunately, for you and for me, I don't have a lot of information on that. Actually, it was more of a freeze in printing. A similar thing happened two years ago—there was an excess of inventory in one of the warehouses—

DAK: *Inventory of—*

MIKE: Comics. Some printed, some in bags, others waiting to be put in bags. When that was discovered, we were told to stop printing. There was a one or two month hiatus, and then it resumed again. This time it's been a bit longer; it seems to be a more serious problem.

DAK: *When did they shut down?*

MIKE: Sometime in March. We have printed the books scheduled for March, but the others never got printed.

DAK: *It's interesting that you refer to them by month because, since they're bagged, they aren't sold on newsstands by month anymore. . .*

MIKE: That's purely for editorial purposes. But every comic *does* have an issue number.

DAK: *I notice the prices are competitive.*

MIKE: That seems to be an industry thing—that no one can jump prices without everyone jumping. You get three sixty-cent comics in a bag for $1.39, so it's not really sixty cents, it's less.

DAK: *A "sixty-cent value." Anyway, you're still producing comics, even though right now you're not publishing?*

MIKE: Yes. I ran into a little problem, last time we stopped printing: I stopped getting material done. When we started printing again, it was the old story: we need *six* books. . .tomorrow! And they didn't exist. This time, I said I wasn't going to get caught in that kind of bind. I continued with the creative work and I now have a year's worth of books sitting in my office, so if and when we get a "green light" or if we are rushed, I'll be on pace with some sort of schedule.

DAK: *Apparently, Whitman isn't giving up, because they continue to keep a complete editorial staff.*

MIKE: It's somewhat baffling. But I don't think they've given up. There's a long tradition of comics in the company and a lot of people at Whitman feel that it would be a shame to discontinue publishing comics. From a practical standpoint, there are all kinds of contractual arrangements with licensers that keeps the line going.

DAK: *What is your best-selling comic?*

MIKE: That's hard to say. Unlike DC and Marvel, we don't get individual title sales figures. I've actually never seen a list of how many copies are sold and in what order they rank. The other thing to consider, of course, is when comics are sold three in a bag, it's almost impossible to say. If there's a BUGS BUNNY and YOSEMITE SAM and DAFFY DUCK, why did the kid buy it? Does he buy only for the one, or does he like all three?

DAK: *So you don't really know which are the prestige books, where you might assign your top writers and artists.*

MIKE: Traditionally, the funny animal books have swamped any other type of book. At one point, they sold in the millions. Recently, that's shifted. With our distribution problems and us not having that much product out there, DR. SOLAR and MAGNUS are probably, for us, the big fan favorites. I feel kind of proud about having revived them. I didn't read them when I was a kid. I pretty much stuck with DC. When I saw the books that I had in the line—some mystery

"...although good art is important in

books, TWILIGHT ZONE and BORIS KARLOFF, a couple of ghost books, some licensed properties—I asked if they had any superheroes. SOLAR and MAGNUS were brought up. I went into the library and read all the old issues and I pushed to revive them.

DAK: *What sort of hierarchy is there, if you want to revive something?*

MIKE: There's an executive editor named **Wally Green,** who is the head of the periodicals department. There were three, there are now two editors under him. If I have an idea for a new book or a revival, I discuss it with Wally and it is fundamentally his decision. Our schedule is geared to the bag system. We have to offer a bagged assortment to prospective buyers. They'll order six "adventure" bags or twelve "Disney" bags or ten "general cartoon" bags. It's not practical or logical to think of how a title would do individually, because it's going to be in with two other titles in the same *genre.*

The story about MAGNUS is kind of interesting. Just about the time that SOLAR was revived, we phased out advertising, which left a ten page gap. Where we could reprint, we did, but with only twenty-seven previously-published issues of SOLAR and no ten-page stories, it was impractical. I suggested we use this "windfall" as a chance to bring MAGNUS back, so it was revived as a ten-page back-up. That was in 1981. When the 1982 schedule was released, I found lo! and behold, he had gotten his own title.

D. JON ZIMMERMAN: *Speaking of that, having read a recent issue, I noticed it's substantially different from the Russ Manning version. Have you had any reactions to the new MAGNUS?*

MIKE: I haven't gotten any letters directly. We don't publish letters pages.

Z: *Western/Gold Key used to have one that featured letters and drawings from the readers. I remember seeing it in MAGNUS and a couple of the others...*

MIKE: It was a popular feature in the adventure and some of the animated books. There was a GOLD KEY CLUB, where you'd send in drawings of your own monsters. I liked that idea a lot and was hoping to get a letters page going in BUCK ROGERS. I had gotten two issues done when we stopped going single copy —which, I think, was January 1979. We went three in a bag, and once you lose the periodical nature of any magazine, it negates a letters page, which deals with what happened in the last one or two issues. When you've got three issues of BUCK ROGERS in one bag, there's no room for reader reaction, so the letters page concept bit the dust.

DAK: *Did BUCK ROGERS get much fan mail?*

MIKE: We have a much younger readership than Marvel or DC, and the mail I get is not generally about the art being good or bad. I get letters like "Dear Buck, I watch your show every week, how do you remember all those lines?" They write to the characters, not to the editors. They're not aware there's a creative team.

Z: *That believability that kids have is so real.*

MIKE: It's fun to get letters like that. It shows that you're giving them the fantasy escape which the whole thing is about. When I get a letter addressed to Buck Rogers, it's okay that the kid doesn't necessarily write to me. We rarely get the type of letters found in Marvel or DC—serious critiques of an individual's works by qualified or unqualified people.

I have not gotten any letters specifically on MAGNUS, but there was a fan review that was very negative. I'm always open to constructive criticism, but this happened to dwell on the passing of **Russ Manning,** which we all feel. In fact, I contacted him and asked if he wanted to draw the book. This was six months before he passed away. He was very excited about the revival. He asked to see a sample script, to see how **Roger McKenzie** was writing it. Personally, I think Roger's done a terrific job. I sent Russ the first script. A lot of time went by. Finally, Russ contacted me. He said he liked the story very much, but his doctors advised against taking any project. **Frank Bolle** is not **Russ Manning.** No one is. Russ was a unique artist.

DAK: *Was the negative review published in the COMICS JOURNAL?*

MIKE: Yes.

DAK: *What do you think of that? They seem pretty feisty, shall we say.*

MIKE: With MAGNUS they accused Frank of drawing stick figures, and I think it's pretty obvious that's not the case. He's got a different style from Russ, that's all. MAGNUS is a heavily action-oriented strip and I think Frank has developed. At the beginning, the figures might have been a little stiffer than they should have been. He worked on the pure action of the figures and on getting tight close-ups to enhance the emotional impact that Roger was putting into the stories. Everyone has a right to their opinion, but I'm disappointed and I hope it doesn't keep people from buying MAGNUS. All I can say is to take a look at it. The story was not really discussed. I found that although good art is important in any comic book, so is a good story. And if it's no good, *tell me why.* There was no discussion of that and I hope the negative review doesn't turn readers away from MAGNUS.

Z: *Do you have a "house style" that leans toward more simplified illustrations, because of your younger audience?*

MIKE: Yes, the page structure is more rigid, although we do occasionally break from it. **Dan Spiegle** did some beautiful

TWEETY & SYLVESTER as drawn by John Costanza in issue # 119.

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any comic book, so is a good story."

MAN IS WEAK, DEPENDENT ... UNABLE AND UNWILLING TO RULE HIMSELF.
FOR HIS OWN GOOD, WE MUST RULE.
RULE WITH AN IRON HAND, SO TO SPEAK... SOMETHING I WILL NOT ALLOW!
SQUEE!
POI-R
M
© 1982 Western Publishing Co. Inc.

Above: Philosophy from MAGNUS #48. Below: from MAGNUS #47

design pages in SOLAR and opened it up, but basically we like to stick to a standard five or six panel page.

DAK: *Is there also a house style for writing?*

MIKE: Yes, very light copy. There's maybe half as much copy on a given page as in Marvel or DC books. I'm a strong believer in letting the pictures tell the story, for the most part. You should almost be able to get the story without reading a single word—then you add the words for depth, enhancement, characterization or scene changes. But if you want to write a novel, write a novel.

DAK: *Roger McKenzie has previously written for Marvel and DC and Warren —did he just naturally adapt to the simpler style?*

MIKE: He did. He did a MARVEL FANFARE, I think featuring Daredevil, after he had been writing for us for a while, and I noticed it was very copy light. I think he enjoys working that way, because he writes very cinematically. You'll have a series of close-ups and then maybe one word in a burst balloon.

Z: *Are all the stories done full script?*

MIKE: Everything is.

DAK: *No one works in the so-called Marvel style?*

MIKE: No.

DAK: *Do you have any cross-over of people who do ARCHIE or RICHIE RICH?*

MIKE: No. I have met several artists who have done the other stuff. **Bill Dubay** had a very short stint as an editor at Western. He created a new series for the SHROUD OF MYSTERY book, about a detective.

DAK: *That's quite a contrast. . . the difference between Warren and Whitman.*

MIKE: The man's a real professional. He's taken some hard knocks in the fan press, especially when he wrote a POP-EYE. I think he wrote a perfectly charming POPEYE story. He's a good writer.

DAK: *How are the pay rates?*

MIKE: They're not comparable, they're less, sometimes considerably so. As a result, we sometimes get people who have only worked for Western and not the other companies. On the other hand, we've gotten some who have worked for the other places and were willing to take a cut because either they liked the title or the editor.

DAK: *Or they need the work.*

MIKE: Or they need the work. I came in *not* through the comic industry. Both Bill and **Robin Snyder**, during their editorial stints there, had the advantage of having spent some time in the field and knew not only people's work, but the people themselves. **Al McWilliams** has worked for us for a while. **Nick Cuti** did a BUCK ROGERS story. He's now over at DC. **Dan Spiegle** is the opposite. He had been working for Western for twenty years. He lives in California and did a lot of Disney stuff. DC said they wanted him and we couldn't compete with the rates.

DAK: *I guess you buy all rights.*

MIKE: Yes, we do.

DAK: *Do you read any of the Marvels?*

MIKE: I'm an avid STAR WARS fan in films and comics. I have just about the whole run of Marvel's adaptations of STAR WARS. I like them. I'm waiting for the INDIANA JONES comic, and I'll pick up a SPIDER-MAN, HULK or FANTASTIC FOUR here and there.

DAK: *What about DC?*

MIKE: I'm curious about some of their special projects. I picked up CAMELOT 3000. I thought the first issue was very well done. The new SUPERGIRL comic —thinking about the old days and how they've updated the characters—and

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"The Comics Code is a waste. . .look at

sometimes I'll pick up a SUPERMAN or ACTION.

DAK: *Do you ever have a runaway bestseller at Western? For instance, no one at Marvel had any idea that STAR WARS would be such a success. . .*

MIKE: So far in my experience, the film adaptations that we've done haven't done poorly, but none of them were blockbusters. We've had some luck selling through book clubs. FLASH GORDON did fairly well. I'm not sure how the movie did, but the book's success had a lot to do with **Al Williamson** realizing a lifelong dream. He did just about the most spectacular job I've ever seen on any comic book. We had some luck through our special markets division, but nothing that took the stores by storm.

DAK: *Is there any intent to do superheroes over there?*

MIKE: Not superheroes *per se*, but I've been trying to get some new series started. SHADOW PLAY is an anthology of one-shot stories, but I've also been able to create several series that I believe would fare well, as their own titles. One is called ZORR OF SHADOWLAND, which **Rich Margopoulos** created. It might be a superhero, but it's not a costumed one. I'd like to try different things, like an epic fantasy, without getting too close to Tolkien or too violent, which our own editorial policy would tone down. It'd be silly for us to do a barbarian, and then not be able to show him being a barbarian.

DAK: *Although you did plan to publish THUNDARR, before the freeze. . .*

MIKE: Yes, but being based on a Saturday morning series, that was already toned down.

DAK: *There's no Comics Code Authority seal of approval on Whitman's comics. Why is that?*

MIKE: We've always felt that our editorial policy covers it. It's far more strict than the Comics Code. Wally feels that he's the arbiter and if it gets his approval, it is—as they used to say—pure, wholesome and fun for the kids. The Comics Code is almost like a rubber-stamp, a waste of money. Just look at what the Code lets through at Marvel and DC—far more than anything Western would publish *without* the seal. Why should we pay them to put their stamp on it, when they're not really doing their job?

DAK: *Have you ever run into any problems bringing in a story to Wally that he didn't pass?*

MIKE: We've had our disagreements. We have pretty rigid guidelines and I've tried to push the parameters. Wally sees the story in final art form, so I'm pretty much on my own until then.

Z: *Do you feel your comics are at all contemporary?*

MIKE: Not particularly. That's not the main thrust.

DAK: *Don't you think that lack of understanding of what current comics readers want is what may be responsible for sales of Archie Comics falling off? And, by extension, Western?*

MIKE: That's a good possibility, because the fan market seems to demand more contemporary themes. We have roughly forty titles, and thirty of them are funny animal titles. What I go for in TWEETY AND SYLVESTER is something that is timeless, something that will be just as enjoyable after ten years. The same Warner Brothers cartoons are racking up the ratings, the same way they did twenty years ago, because they're good. With the adventure books, it's a little more difficult. With MAGNUS, there's the advantage that it's set in the future. DR. SOLAR has the advantage of being isolated off in Atom Valley. The adventure books are rarely topical.

DAK: *I had no idea how big the line was. Are they monthlies or bi-monthlies?*

MIKE: The Disneys are all monthlies. LOONEY TUNES and a couple of the Warner Brothers titles are monthlies, but all the adventure books and a few of the others are bi-monthlies. All of the New York books are bi-monthlies.

DAK: *How many do you publish out of the office here in New York?*

MIKE: About fifteen to twenty.

DAK: *Has there ever been any discussion of just going reprint?*

MIKE: No.

DAK: *Would anyone know the difference*

Dr. Solar on the dangers of nuclear radiation (from #34).

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what they let through at Marvel and DC."

If there was a reprinted TWEETY AND SYLVESTER, as opposed to new?

MIKE: In that particular book, of the thirty-two pages of content, twenty-two are new and ten are reprint. So, there is a certain amount of recycling old material for cost's sake. But I've never heard talk of going all reprint. I think there's a feeling of getting work done and keeping people working. There are also deals with Warner Brothers and Disney that require a certain number of new pages per year. A lot of the stuff is sent overseas, where Disney has a large market. They take the black-and-white negatives of our stuff and ship them for printing over there.

DAK: *Are they very strict on approval?*

MIKE: Disney, not so much. Warners, a little bit more. Neither one is really a problem. For the most part, they're easy to work with.

Z: *Has there been enough interest to warrant reprinting any special Carl Barks editions of Disney stories?*

MIKE: Oh yes, we have several planned. We're working on a Barks fan club special edition. There are several large hardcover twenty- or thirty-dollar editions available from specialty publishers, so we're working on a low-priced one. We're trying to find stuff that's never been reprinted.

Z: *Do you have any plans for other projects? Do you think there's a market for an album edition of the Russ Manning MAGNUS stories?*

MIKE: That hasn't been explored. I'm sure we'll get letters and see what kind of demand there is.

DAK: *How about TARZAN? You guys used to publish the comics, before Marvel and DC. How come you haven't picked him up?*

MIKE: I don't know. I know Robin made a suggestion to try and revive it.

DAK: *Talk about pay cuts—I'd be over there to script TARZAN!*

MIKE: Maybe they feel the time isn't right, or it's dated. These are just guesses. I can't tell you how many people have asked about working on MAGNUS. I didn't know what a vault of things I opened up when I revived it, both from fans and creators.

Z: *Who are the writers and artists over there now?*

MIKE: Roger writes MAGNUS and SOLAR, **Dan Spiegle** drew the first few issues of SOLAR, and **Dick Ayers** came over and is drawing that now. We have two foreign artists on TUROK who are really fine and aren't well known in this country, **Alberto Gioletti** and **Adolfo Bullya.** Alberto is Italian and Adolfo is Spanish.

John Costanza is an extremely talented artist and an awful lot of people don't know this. He's also a fine letterer, which is where most people know him from. He has been drawing TWEETY AND SYLVESTER for me for three years, and in the last six months he's been drawing YOSEMITE SAM. He is, in my opinion, the best artist of those Warner Brothers characters in the business. He's also done TOM AND JERRY and MIGHTY MOUSE. He's a very talented artist in the funny animal category and people should know that.

John Aibano is a very funny writer who has done some very witty plots for TWEETY AND SYLVESTER and YOSEMITE SAM. I know he's done adventure stuff for Marvel and DC. He's one of those rare birds that can do either straight adventure or the funny stuff.

Mike Kirschenbaum, who has done some work for Warner animation, has written a few of the TWEETY AND SYLVESTER stories. **Mark Lasky** is an editor at United Features Syndicate and a cartoonist himself has written for TWEETY AND SYLVESTER.

Rich Margopoulos has created some new series. There's **Fred Carrillo** and **Tony deZuniga. Steve Ditko** has done some wonderful things for us.

DAK: *Have any of Ditko's stories seen print?*

MIKE: Not yet. He did a GRIMM'S GHOST STORY, and a story for a new title called SHADOW PLAY, which was given to me as a mystery book. We had about one hundred pages of artwork left over from some Ripley's GHOST STORIES and made them general mystery stories and came up with two new titles. THE SHROUD OF MYSTERY was one, which I left pretty much intact as a standard mystery, but I wanted to try something different on SHADOW PLAY. I wanted to make it more of a fantasy—like sword and sorcery but with the emphasis on the sorcery. Wizards and witches and elves in the woods and good magic and bad magic. Steve also did a FLASH GORDON. He and **Jack Harris** created a new character, in a new series called Star Guider, for a new title called ASTRAL FRONTIER, which started as a space anthology.

DAK: *So are you planning to stick with Whitman?*

MIKE: Yeah, I'd like to see us get out of the doldrums and get going again. The problems of sales and distribution can be solved. Wait until you see the stuff that's sitting in my drawer. I'm very proud of it.

From DOCTOR SOLAR #33 by Roger McKenzie and Dick Ayers

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Featuring CRYSTAR~, WARBOW~, KALIBAR~, KOTH~, STALAX~, MOLTAR~, MAGMA MEN~, FELDSPAR~, OGEODE~, ZARDETH~, CRYSTALIUM~, AMBARA~, LAVOUR~.

"We're delighted with this royalty scheme."

JIM GALTON

Jim Galton is Marvel's top corporate man. Through soft-spoken and low-key in manner, there is an intensity about him that belies the unprepossessing first impression he makes. Jim is in continual contact with Marvel's parent corporation, Cadence Industries, and is intimately involved with making far-reaching decisions that affect not only everyone at Marvel — but, ultimately, that affect comics fans directly through new formats and different forms of distribution, including other media such as animation.

Jim was delighted to have the opportunity of expressing his views to interested comics enthusiasts, and I'm happy to be able to present this inside interview with one of comics most powerful behind-the-scenes men. . .

"My job is to squeeze everything we

DAK: *Your name appears in the small print of all the Marvel books as President of Cadence Publishing, but what exactly is your job? What do you do?*

JIM GALTON: Basically, I coordinate all the publishing, merchandizing, licenses and film work that we do. My job is to find opportunities where we can utilize our basic strengths, which are publishing, and spread them into other media, and to use a euphemism, squeeze out everything that we possibly can squeeze out of the creative talents that we have in all of our operations.

DAK: *Everyone at Marvel reports to you. Who do you report to at Cadence?*

JIM: Sheldon Feinberg. He's the Chairman of the Board.

DAK: *Do you keep in close touch with him?*

JIM: I talk to Mr. Feinberg at least a couple times a week. And I probably see him two or three times a month.

DAK. *How much autonomy do you have in making decisions for Marvel?*

JIM: Mr. Feinberg's management style is to allow each division head to do pretty much what he wants to do. Obviously, if I want to do something that has a large capital expenditure, or if I want to go into a new type of business, I have to explain my business plans to him and the reasons why I think it's something we should do, and I'd have to get his approval and the approval of the Board of Directors. Day-to-day operations are totally within my purview.

DAK: *It was a big change to institute the royalty system. Was Cadence involved in that?*

JIM: I wouldn't say a lot of involvement, but it certainly took a series of meetings with the management of Cadence. Primarily, because it involved extremely large expenditures of money. This royalty scheme was not for the future, but a scheme for paying real dollars today, to the people whose books were performing extremely well. It was a substantial amount of money which we have to allocate right from the bottom line, which increased the costs of our production and publications substantially—so that's why it took a great deal of soul searching on our part to see whether that would be to our benefit and increase sales. I have to tell you that it has, and we're delighted with it. We're very happy with the way it's turned out.

DAK: *It changed the whole profit situation?*

JIM: I believe that what happened was, we had a whole brand new burst of creativity. Melding that with our marketing expertise, now that we really know how to sell and merchandise what we do, it's made a lot of money for everybody. Which is really the name of the game.

DAK: *You seem to have put more emphasis, in recent years, on merchandizing. . .*

JIM: We were almost totally dependent upon the independent wholesalers to sell our product and their degree of interest was not very high.

DAK: *What moves did you make to get marketing going?*

JIM: We started investing money in direct marketing efforts. We put on a number of people just to deal with the direct sales market specifically.

Also, one of the things we're starting to do very successfully is something I've always felt very strong about. With all the various elements we have within our corporate structure here at Marvel, we have the capabilities of working together extremely well. Our licensing and marketing people have brought in properties that we had our creative publishing people work on to give persona. We've taken things like ROM, which was just an inanimate toy. We've given it a persona. The toy doesn't exist anymore, but ROM still exists in Marvel Comics. The creative work we did on G.I. JOE was an outstanding job. We published the comic book and created a lot of toys and merchandise for Hasbro, which our marketing people are licensing other people to do. We have about thirty-five licenses on G.I. Joe. It's going to deliver a lot of merchandizing income to Hasbro. We have the capabilities within the company for doing a lot of creative marketing, which will include publishing, the selling of merchandizing licenses for products surrounding the publishing and individual toys that we may be working with. We have the ability in our studios to do animated shows based on those characters and to produce television commercials. We did the commercials for G.I. Joe in our own studio, to help sell the magazine. There is, really, ultimate synergy among all the things that we do. If each of the people in the various segments of the company understands what the other does and how they do it, we have terrific potential. One of the problems with the bigger companies is that they always talk about synergy, but it never really works, because each individual company is so large that they're all trying

Chesty, Timothy, Algernon - and friends - from Marvel Productions' PANDAMONIUM.

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possibly can out of the creative talents."

to protect their own domains. When I worked for CBS in one of their publishing divisions, I remember one instance when we were selling a series of Rock books, and I thought what better means of selling Rock books than having CBS Records merchandizing them in record stores. I couldn't convince them to do it worth a damn. This really does happen in very large companies. Divisions which should work together, don't work together. We're a very small company, in that regard, and we can make it work if the people do talk to one another and we have tremendous opportunities because we *can* make those types of things work.

DAK: *What you're describing indicates a change in the nature of Marvel, which at one time was purely concerned with publishing comics. . .*

JIM: When I came to the business, seven or eight years ago, I was coming into a publishing genre that was really dying. Something had to be done to try to invigorate it and put some new life into it. It was a publishing genre that was in very serious trouble, but yet had a tremendous, tremendous following on the part of kids. What was happening was the nature of the places where comic books could be sold was changing. They used to be sold in mom-and-pop stationery stores. There aren't any mom-and-pop stationery stores any more. Comic books were sold in these places that kids hung out. They're not sold where kids hang out now days, like Burger King and McDonald's. We had to do something to broaden the base of what was strictly a comic-book publishing company. In broadening the base, we have become highly successful and each one of these bases helps to feed the other. Another example of how this all works synergistically is that we not only sell merchandise licenses to other people, we buy other people's licenses. We are the only company that goes after movie tie-ins. We are publishing SMURF comic books, at this point, and this again broadens the whole base, because we try to tie in with things we think could do well in our genre, and things which we think will have tremendous mass appeal and a lot of advertising and promotional potential. This permits us to not rely strictly on our own creativity. We are using other people's creativity because we obviously can't have a lock on all the creativity in the world.

DAK: *The studio on the West Coast was obviously a big step. How did that come about?*

JIM: Again, looking to broaden the base of our income stream, it was obvious that in addition to our distribution problems of getting our comic books out to where the kids were, the other problem is that television was taking up a huge, huge amount of kids' time. A lot of kids probably said to themselves, why should I spend fifty or sixty cents on a comic book if I can see it move and speak to me for free on television in living color. So it was just a means of getting our foot in both camps, because we had been letting other people license our properties, when we should be doing them ourselves, and animated films have a lot of residual value. They'll be worth a lot of money in fifty years. They'll never go out of style. Right now, the second highest rated show on Saturday morning is BUGS BUNNY SHOWS which were done back in the forties. If we produce good shows, we'll be able to sell them for years. Every new show we sell to television means thirteen additional films we can put in our film library to sell in future years. It was a logical step to take static animation and make it move. And it was also a project which will also be very valuable to the future of Marvel. We bring to the film business something no other studio has—that is, no other studio has a publishing arm which is creating material. All the other animation studios are strictly studios, and in most cases they do very little of their own creation. They license other people's properties. We bring to the animation business the creative force that they haven't seen in many, many years.

From Marvel's animated G.I. JOE spot, "Cobra Trap!"

DAK: *How do you go about implementing a decision, such as getting a studio?*

JIM: Once you decide on a course of action, the next step is to find people to staff it and a facility to put the staff in. People are not easy to find, not in this industry. We were very fortunate to find these guys. When we decided to go into the animation business, **David DePatie** was breaking up with his long-time partner, **Friz Freleng**, and David became available, along with **Lee Gunther**, who was his production executive. It was pure happenstance, that both of those things happened at the same time.

DAK: *Did you get resistance from Cadence when you asked for a studio?*

JIM: It was just a matter of convincing them it was a wise step to take. They agreed to it and gave us the money to do so.

DAK: *How long have you been at Marvel?*

JIM: Eight years.

DAK: *What's your background?*

JIM: I've been a publisher all my life. I was a publisher of Popular Library Books, a mass market paperback book company, owned by CBS. Prior to that it had been an independent company, but CBS bought it. I've been in the book business, basically, all my life.

"When I came here, they were losing

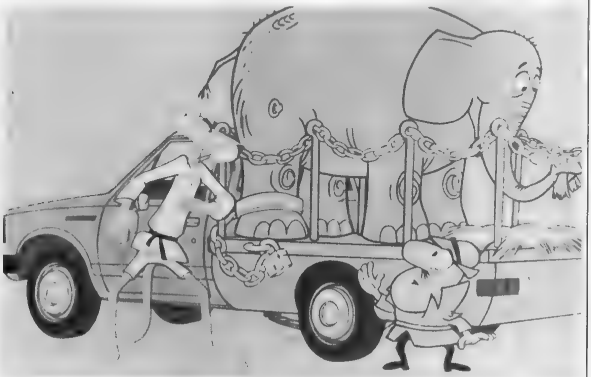
Green Goblin, David DePatie, Jim Galton, Stan Lee and Lee Gunther of Marvel Productions.

DAK: *How did you end up at Marvel?*

JIM: I got fired by CBS. I had worked for **Sheldon Feinberg** for a brief time, when Cadence owned Popular Library for about a year. When they heard I had left CBS, he called me up.

DAK: *When you came over to Marvel did you have in mind all the changes?*

JIM: No, not really. It would be nice to say I had a grand scheme, that this had been fated ever since I was this high, but no. When I first came here, we had two publishing companies—Marvel Comics and a company called Magazine Management, which published movie magazines, confession magazines, and some men's magazines. What I had to do first was stop the drain on the company. They were losing at the rate of two million dollars a year—it was a disaster, a total disaster. It was totally mismanaged. There was no semblance of good publishing. People were doing all kinds of nutty things. The first thing I had to do was put some order into the organization and stop the bleeding. It was bleeding profusely. That took about six months. In the process, we killed a lot of magazines, and pared down the staff, which had been allowed to just grow with no rhyme or reason. After about a year, I made a decision that the future of Cadence Publishing was really



Datsun truck commercial, "Este Chais Datsun," featuring the Pink Panther and Inspector Clouseau.

* 1982 United Artists

$2,000,000 a year. I had to stop the bleeding."

in being a good quality children's publisher. It didn't make sense to be publishing children's material on one floor and on another to be publishing pornographic skin magazines. It was a dichotomy which I, first, couldn't handle on a personal basis. I'm not a pornographer. And second, I didn't think it was right for us to basically be in a kids' business and publish this type of material, so I convinced Cadence to sell off these magazines. I felt very strongly that we could take Marvel Comics and expand it into foreign licensing, publishing and merchandising, and get us on television. If we could do all that, it would more than supplant the income we'd be losing by selling off these other magazines. And they were all secondary publications in their own fields, but they were profitable and it took a bit of convincing to tell them, look, let's get out of these fields. As it turned out it was exactly the right decision to make at the time. We have made vastly more money by being a more narrowly focused publishing company than we ever did before, publishing seventy publications per month. It's worked out the way I thought it would.

DAK: *How do you work with Stan Lee?*

JIM: I talk to **Stan Lee** four or five times a week, sometimes two or three times a day. Stan's efforts at this time are pretty much trying to get us into major motion pictures and live-action on television, as well as working at the studio on our Saturday morning fare. Stan is not actively involved in publishing, although his advice and counsel is sought constantly.

DAK: *He has distanced himself from the publishing to take care of the other stuff?*

JIM: I can't speak for Stan, but he had been publisher for many years—and before that he had been doing the same thing for forty years—and with the advent of the studio, he saw the opportunity to try something new and something which could very quickly become beneficial to the corporation.

DAK: *What's in the works on the corporate level for the future?*

JIM: The latest thing we've done to broaden our base is to start our Marvel Books operation which I have very, very high hopes for. I think this is a business we should have been in a long time ago. Before, we licensed other people to do these types of books, but there's a huge market out there for children's books, coloring books, pop-up books, mix-and-match books. We should be in that business, and now we are. That's the biggest project we've taken on since opening the studio.

We're also very close to getting the financing for a Broadway show, which has been in the works for a long time.

DAK: *That's CAPTAIN AMERICA? I prepared a presentation for the financiers. . .*

JIM: Right. I hope to announce within the next couple months that we have all the financing. So other than expansion in our basic publishing business, and we have a lot of stuff on the drawing boards, we don't have any major projects in the works. Obviously we want to expand on our television efforts and animation. We have four shows on this year and hope to have six on next year.

DAK: *What are the four?*

JIM: THE INCREDIBLE HULK, SPIDER-MAN, PANDAMONIUM and SPAGHETTI AND MEATBALLS. The latter two shows are done with **Fred Silverman's** studio. We hope to expand in that area and in doing things for people other than the networks. We're working with Boston Broadcasters on a science series, which we hope to get into syndication. So within the framework of our publishing operation, within the framework of our studio, within the framework of our merchandise/licensing company, we are expanding.

DAK: *How do you keep on top of all this?*

JIM: I don't keep on top of everything. Obviously, when it comes to nitty-gritty, I like to be involved. It's very exciting. I have quick people handling each department and we communicate well. My style is to walk around the organization. I like to walk. It's a management style which I find very effective. You find out a lot and keep up to date on what's going on. At times it's difficult to know all of what's going on, but I must say I have not had as much fun working anywhere else as I have here over the last eight years.

DAK: *Where would you like to see Marvel in another five years?*

JIM: My idea is that Marvel should be the company that people think of when they think of kids. Marvel should be thought of as the prime supplier of entertainment for kids from ages six to sixty. I believe we should be in the area of family entertainment. I think we have a special place in that the entertainment we provide is visual, whether it be visuals that stand still, like comics, or visuals that move, such as our animation. When you think of kids, you should think of Marvel. That's where I want to be.

Spider-Man pours champagne as Jim Galton offers a toast in honor of Marvel's new offices.

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"I read CHIP 'N' DALE..."

BILL CHADWICK

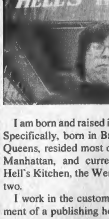

Photo: DAK

I am born and raised in New York City. Specifically, born in Brooklyn, raised in Queens, resided most of my adult life in Manhattan, and currently live here in Hell's Kitchen, the West '40s. I'm thirty-two.

I work in the customer service department of a publishing house and I'm also an aspiring writer. I've written for REASON magazine, THE FREEMAN, and other magazines that none of your readers have heard of. I work at Johnson Reprint Corporation, a part of Academic Press, which is the main organization. We're all subsidiaries of Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

I started reading comics probably around 1954 or 1955, with the advent of the Davy Crockett craze. My earliest recollection of a comic was probably Dell, an adaptation of Walt Disney's DAVY CROCKET. I recall my mother reading it to me, and since I didn't want her always reading comics to me, I took an interest in reading.

I never was big on superhero comic books when I was that young. I read SUPERMAN. I think it was Harvey that did DICK TRACY comics, which were reprints of Dick Tracy newspaper strips.

I liked MAD MAGAZINE, which by that time was out of the comic-book stage, but had a lot of similar-type artwork. I became quite a fanatic. For a long time I was known as Bill Chadwick — the kid who reads MAD MAGAZINE.

I remember reading the first THOR story. I was interested in mythology and I thought it was a great idea making Thor a comic-book character. I recall liking BATMAN for a time. I felt he was a self-made superhero, and a little more interesting than SUPERMAN, who was practically handed it all on a silver platter.

When Marvel Comics became popular, I liked CAPTAIN AMERICA best, and to this day he's probably my favorite superhero. I read them avidly for about four years, then I lost interest and didn't pick them up until 1975, when I saw all the new titles at the newsstand that Marvel came out with.

I saw HOWARD THE DUCK and wanted to know why they would do a duck comic, which I always associated with juvenile comic markets. I started reading it and the in-house printed material indicated that at the same time in DAREDEVIL they were currently doing this and that. In order to keep up, I started reading comics again—mainly because I needed some light, lunch-hour reading, not something controversial which would destroy my digestion. Something you could spread open flat on a table.

From 1975 to 1978 I was again a very avid comic-book reader. I liked CAPTAIN AMERICA, THE AVENGERS and THE DEFENDERS. I gave them up when they became more expensive, when they started going to fifty or sixty cents. None of them would provide sixty cents worth of enjoyment.

The only comic I now read regularly is CHIP 'N' DALE, the Whitman reprints of the earlier ones. Those I enjoy very much—not only because they're such cute little buggers, but they're very clever in their own way. I thought they were geared toward young, simple-minded people, like BABY HUEY comics were, but I read them and found that they were not speaking down to their readers, but speaking up.

They're chipmunks to be reckoned with.

THE LAST WORD

(In conversation with Ed Hannigan. . .)

DAK: *My first inclination was to call the magazine COMICS INTERVIEW, and hide myself in the small print as editor and publisher. I mean, I'd obviously be here as a person who did a lot of interviews, because, hey, I work cheap, I don't charge myself anything! But Salicrup said, no, no, no: call it David Anthony Kraft's COMICS INTERVIEW.*

Jim wouldn't give up. He worked hard to convince me, even though I was dead-set against it. For a month, every time I talked to him, he said my name should be in the title. He gave me little layouts with my name on the logo. It seemed to make good sense while he was saying it.

When we first discussed the interview idea, what concerned me was there are so many magazines about comics. I mean, if you go to a comic-book store and see another, called COMICS INTERVIEW, you think big deal, what does it mean.

So Jim said, what would make it stand out is that none of the names are identified with anyone. This is a way to distinguish your magazine from the rest. You've been around for a long time and done a lot of work. If you put your name on it, people may like your other work or they may hate it — but at least there will be the interest. They'll see David Anthony Kraft's COMICS INTERVIEW and they'll wonder, what about this? Are we going to hate it? Is it as bad as everything he that he's done, or, y'know, will we like it, if we liked his other things? But the title at least stands out — it's not just another magazine with the word "comics" in the title from a nameless, faceless publisher.

Years ago, when I published DRAGONFLAME by Don McGregor and Paul Gulacy, distributor Phil Seuling of Sea Gate ordered a lot of copies of the second printing. He asked why the ads didn't specify that it was David Anthony Kraft publishing this. I thought, why should it? Who cares? He said, people do care. Now Salicrup was saying the same thing.

I was still hesitant. He finally said, don't take my word for it, ask other people. Ask your acquaintances, the people you're around, whoever — get opinions at large. So I asked a half-dozen people who knew about the magazine idea, and with one exception, everyone said: put your name on it.

ED: I'd keep it small and dignified.

DAK: *If I have it at all.*

NEXT ISSUE: You can have the Last Word by sending a letter! Please do.

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For Marvel and DC magazines, please refer to Section VIII

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RR Zillions
Sad Sack
Sad Sack & The Sarge

Snap Opera Romances Wit

SECTION VII DIGESTS

Archie Where R U Digest
Archie Comics Digest
Best of Casper Digest
Best of Dennis Digest
Casper
Archie Double Digest
Betty Veronica Annual
Dennis
Casper Digest Story
Casper Giant Monsters
Dennis and Menace Digest (Marvel)
Harvey Comics Digest
Jughead Jones Digest
Jughead Archie Digest
Laugh Comics Digest
Little Archie Digest
Little Archie Giant Digest
Richie Rich Best of Years
RR Digest Stories
RR Dollars Digest
RR Holiday Digest
RR Million Dollar Digest
RR Vacation Digest

SECTION IV
SPECIALTY AND DIRECT SALE PUBLISHERS

Captain Victory (Pacific)
Mr. Mystic (Pacific)
Rocket Ship Graphic Novel
Sea Gypsy (Pacific)
Starslayer (Pacific)
Baseball Book (Eclipse)
Heavy (Eclipse)
Sabre (Eclipse)
Scout Sniper (Eclipse)
Star Jammer & The Pirates of Pleasure (Eclipse)
Thunder Agents (Eclipse)
Warp (Eclipse)
X-Men Companion (Fantagraphics)

(see the magazine section for more specialty publishers as well)

SECTION VI
CHARLTON COMICS

All Charlton First Issues
Attack
Charlton Action
Back The Attack
Charlton Bullseye
Fightin' Army
Fightin' Five
Fightin' Marines
Ghostly Haunts
Haunted (Baron Weirwulf)

SECTION VII
DIGESTS

Archie Where R U Digest
Archie Comics Digest
Best of Casper Digest
Best of Dennis Digest
Casper
Archie Double Digest
Betty Veronica Annual
Dennis
Casper Digest Story
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Little Archie Digest
Little Archie Giant Digest
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RR Digest Stories
RR Dollars Digest
RR Holiday Digest
RR Million Dollar Digest
RR Vacation Digest

SECTION VIII MAGAZINES AND SPECIALTY ITEMS

(remarkes or shortly contains the following services:***

Adventurer Illustrated***
(New Media)
Amazing Heroes***
Analog
Bizarre Adventures***
(Marvel)
Cerebus the Aardvark***
Cinefantastique***
Cinefex***
Cinemagic (Starog)
Comic Art
DUI International
Comic Reader***
Comics Feature***
(New Media)
Comics Interview***
Comics Newsstand***
Comics Scene***(Starlog)
Creepy
Crescent Illustrated
Dracula***(Marvel)
Creepy***(Warren)
Echoes Magazine***
Eerie***(Warren)
Elfquest***(Marvel)
Enterprise Incidents***
(Pacific)

Epic***(Marvel)
Famous Monsters (Warren)
Fangoria (Starlog)
Fantastic Monsters
(Pacific)
Fantastic Films
Fantastic Science Fiction
Fantasy Illustrated***
(New Media)
Fantasy Modelling (Starlog)
First Kingdom***(Pacific)
Galaxy Magazine
Gauntlet
Gallery Specials
Gates of Eden***(Fantagor)
Gorilla***(Warren)
Heavy Metal***
Heavy Metal Specials***
Hoodoo Gods
Hulkster
Indiana Jahnna's SF Magazine
I, DC*** (New Media)
Kung Fu
Mad Special***
Marvel Comics Index***
(Marvel)
Marvel Super Special***
(Marvel)
Mayfair
National Lampoon
Nth Lamp Specials
1984 Magazine***(Warren)
Omni
Omni Specials
Penthouse
Penthouse Specials
Omni
Playboy Specials
Rampart***(Starslayer)
Rocket's Blast***
(Comicollector)
Savage Sword of Conan***
(Marvel)
Scene***(Archie Sins)
Starlog
Starlog Specials
Swords of Conan***
Trek (Star Trek)***
(New Media)
Vampirella***(Warren)
Weird***(Archie Sins)

SECTION IX
TREASURIES AND OTHER ITEMS

All DC Treasuries
All Marvel Treasuries
All DC Portfolios
All Marvel Portfolios

(For information on WHITMAN comics and BRITISH publications please write us!)

****WHEN YOU JOIN WE WILL SEND AN UPDATE LISTING WHICH SHOWS ALL THE NEW COMICS AND MAGAZINES NOW AVAILABLE IN ADDITION TO THOSE ABOVE! SO HURRY!

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